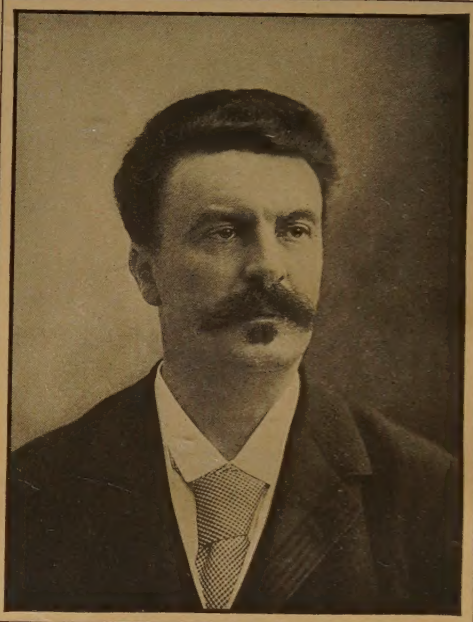
SHORT STORY CLASSICS

FOREIGN



Guy de Maupassant

SHORT STORY CLASSICS

(FOREIGN)

VOLUME FIVE
FRENCH II

EDITED BY
William Patten

WITH
AN INTRODUCTION
AND NOTES



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LA BRETONNE

BY CLAUDE ADHÉMAR ANDRÉ THEURIET



André Theuriet, born at Marly-le-Roi in 1833, went to Paris to study law, and finally became head of the Government Department of Finance. In 1857 appeared the charming collection of verses called "Chemin des Bois," which was crowned by the Academy, and which earned for the author the title of "Song Sparrow" from the great critic Sainte-Beuve.

Theuriet received, in 1890, the Vitel prize from the Academy for general literary excellence, and was admitted to that body in 1896. His style is sane, fresh, limpid, delicate, and rich in color. He is a lover of nature with a profound feeling for the peasant.

Theuriet's standing is well assured when we consider that such men as Jules Claretie, Adolph Brisson, François Coppée, all contributed appreciations of Theuriet in "Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires," soon after his death, on April 23, 1907.

LA BRETONNE

BY ANDRÉ THEURIET

ONE November evening, the eve of Sainte-Catherine's Day, the gate of the Auberive prison turned upon its hinges to allow to pass out a woman of some thirty years, clad in a faded woolen gown and coiffed in a linen cap that framed in a singular fashion a face pale and puffed by that sickly-hued fat which develops on prison regimen. She was a prisoner whom they had just liberated, and whom her companions of detention called La Bretonne.

Condemned for infanticide, it was exactly, day for day, six years ago that the prison van had brought her to the Centrale. Now, in her former garb, and with her small stock of money received from the clerk in her pocket, she found herself free and with her road-pass stamped for Langres.

The courier for Langres, however, had long since gone. Cowed and awkward, she took her way stumblingly toward the chief inn of the borough, and with trembling voice asked shelter for the night. But the inn was crowded, and the *aubergiste,* who did not care to harbor "one of those birds from over yonder," counseled her to push on to the *cabaret* at the far end of the village.

La Bretonne passed on, and, more trembling and

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awkward than ever, knocked at the door of that cabaret, which, properly speaking, was but a cantine for laborers. The cabaretière also eyed her askance, scenting doubtless a "discharged" from the Centrale, and finally refused her on the plea that she had no bed to give her.

La Bretonne dared not insist, but with bowed head pursued her way, while at the bottom of her soul rose and grew a dull hatred for that world which thus repulsed her.

She had no other resource than to gain Langres afoot.

Toward the end of November, night comes quickly. Soon she found herself enveloped in darkness, on a grayish road that ran between two divisions of the forest, and where the north wind whistled fiercely, choked her with dust, and pelted her with dead leaves.

After six years of sedentary and recluse life her legs were stiff, the muscles knotted and her feet, accustomed to sabots, pinched and bruised by her new slippers. At the end of a league she felt them blistered and herself exhausted. She dropped upon a pile of stones by the wayside, shivering and asking herself if she was going to be forced to perish of cold and hunger in this black night, under this icy breeze, which froze her to the marrow.

All at once, in the solitude of the road, she seemed to hear the droning notes of a voice singing. She listened and distinguished the air of one of those caressing and monotonous chants with which one soothes young children.

She was not alone, then!

She struggled to her feet and in the direction from which the voice came, and there, at the turn of a cross-road, perceived a reddish light streaming through the branches. Five minutes later she was before a mud-walled hovel, whose roof, covered by squares of sod, leaned again the rock, and whose window had allowed to pass that beckoning ray.

With anxious heart she decided to knock.

The chant ceased instantly and a woman opened the door, a peasant woman, no older than La Bretonne herself, but faded and aged by work. Her bodice, torn in places, displayed the skin tanned and dirty; her red hair escaped disheveled from under a soiled stuff cap, and her gray eyes regarded with amazement the stranger whose face had in it something of touching loneliness.

"Good evening!" said she, lifting yet higher the sputtering lamp in her hand; "what do you desire?"

"I am unable to go on," murmured La Bretonne, in a voice broken by a sob; "the city is far, and if you will lodge me for the night, you will do me a service. . . . I have money; I will pay you for the trouble."

"Enter," replied the other, after a moment's hesitancy; "but why," continued she, in a tone more curious than suspicious, "did you not sleep at Auberive?"

"They would not give me a lodging," lowering her blue eyes and taken with a sudden scruple, "be—because, see you, I come from the Maison Centrale."

"So! the Maison Centrale! but no matter—enter—I fear nothing, having known only misery. More-

over, I've a conscience against turning a Christian from the door on a night like this. I'll give you a bed and a slice of cheese."

And she pulled from the eaves some bundles of dried heather and spread them as a pallet in the corner by the fire.

"Do you live here alone?" demanded La Bretonne, timidly.

"Yes, with my *gâchette*, going on seven years now. I earn our living by working in the wood."

"Your man, then, is dead?"

"Yes," said the other bruskly, "the *gâchette* has no father. Briefly, to each his sorrow! But come, behold your straw, and two or three potatoes left from supper. It is all I can offer you—"

She was called by a childish voice coming from a dark nook, separated from the room by a board partition.

"Good night!" she repeated, "the little one cries; I I must go, but sleep you well!"

And taking up the lamp she passed into the closet, leaving La Bretonne crouched alone in the darkness.

Stretched upon her heather, after she had eaten her supper, she strove to close her eyes, but sleep would not come to her. Through the thin partition she heard the mother still softly talking to the child, whom the arrival of a stranger had wakened, and who did not wish to go to sleep again.

The mother soothed and fondled it with words of endearment that somehow strangely disturbed La Bretonne. That outburst of simple tenderness seemed

to waken a confused maternal instinct in the soul of that girl condemned in the past for having stifled her new-born.

"If things had not gone so badly with me," thought La Bretonne, sorrowfully, "*it* would have been the same age as this little one here."

At that thought and at the sound of that childish voice, a sickening shudder seemed to shake her very vitals; something soft and tender to spring up in that soured heart, and an increasing need for the relief of tears.

"But come, come, my little one," the mother cried, "to sleep you must go! And if you are good and do as I say, to-morrow I'll take you to the Sainte-Catherine's Fair!"

"The *fête* of little children, mama; the *fête* of little children, you mean?"

"Yes, my angel, of little children."

"And the day when the good Sainte-Catherine brings playthings to the babies, mama?"

"Sometimes—yes."

"Then why doesn't she bring playthings to our house, mama?"

"We live too far away, perhaps; and then—we are too poor."

"She brings them only to rich babies, then, mama? But why, mama, why, I say? I should love to see playthings!"

"Eh, bien! some day you may, if you are very good —to-night, perhaps, if you are wise and go to sleep soon."

"I will, then, mama, I will right away, so she can bring them to-morrow."

The little voice ceased; there was a long silence; then a long breath, even and light!

The child slept at last—the mother also.

La Bretonne, only, did not sleep! An emotion, at once poignant and tender, tore at her heart, and she thought more than ever of that other little one, whom they said she had killed. . . . This lasted till dawn.

Mother and child slept still, but La Bretonne was up and out, gliding hurriedly and furtively in the direction of Auberive and slackening her pace only when the first houses of the village came in sight.

Soon she had reached and was traversing its only street, walking slowly now and scanning with all her eyes the signs of the shops. One at last seemed to fix her attention. She knocked at the shutter and presently it opened. A mercer's shop, apparently, but also with some toys and playthings in the window—poor, pitiful trifles, a pasteboard doll, a Noah's ark, a wooly, stiff-legged little sheep!

To the astonishment of the merchant, La Bretonne purchased them all, paid, and went out. She had resumed the road to the hovel in the wood, when suddenly a hand fell heavily upon her shoulder, and she was face to face with a brigadier of *gendarmerie*.

The unhappy one had forgotten that it was forbidden to liberated prisoners to loiter near the Maison Centrale.

"Instead of vagabondizing here, you should already be at Langres," said the brigadier, gruffly. "Come,

march, be off with you! To the road, to the road, I say!"

She sought to explain. Pains lost. At once a passing cart was pressed into service, La Bretonne bundled into it, and in charge of a *gendarme* once more en route for Langres.

The cart jolted lumberingly over the frozen ruts. The poor La Bretonne clutched with a heart-broken air her bundle of playthings in her freezing fingers.

All at once, at a turn of the road, she recognized the cross path that led through the wood. Her heart leaped and she besought the *gendarme* to stop only one moment. She had a commission for La Fleuriotte, the woman that lived there!

She supplicated with so much fervor that the *gendarme,* a good man at heart, allowed himself to be persuaded. They stopped, tied the horse to a tree, and ascended the pathway.

Before the door La Fleuriotte hewed the gathered wood into the required fagots. On seeing her visitor return, accompanied by a *gendarme,* she stood open-mouthed and with arms hanging.

"Hist!" said La Bretonne, "hist! the little one—does it sleep still?"

"Yes—but—"

"Then, here, these playthings, lay them on the bed and tell her Sainte-Catherine brought them. I returned to Auberive for them; but it seems I had no right to do it, and they are taking me now to Langres."

"Holy Mother of God!" cried the amazed La Fleuriotte.

"Hist! be still, I say!"

And drawing near the bed herself, followed always by her escort, La Bretonne scattered upon the coverlet the doll, the Noah's ark, and the stiff-legged, woolly, and somewhat grimy little lamb, bent the bare arm of the child till it clasped the latter, then turned with a smile.

"Now," said she, addressing the *gendarme,* vigorously rubbing his eyes with the cuff of his jacket—the frost, it seemed, had gotten into them—"I am ready: we can go!"

WHICH WAS THE MADMAN?

BY EDMOND FRANÇOIS VALENTIN ABOUT



Edmond About, born at Dieuze in 1828, author of a play, "Gaetana," the noisy failure of which crushed for a long time his dramatic aspiration, turned to the writing of novels, such as "The Marriages of Paris," "Madelon," and "The Romish Question," the latter a book which attacked with great venom and vivacity the temporal power of the Pope. "The Man of the Old School" is a general title under which he collected separate stories, studies of social reform, such as "The Romance of an Honest Man," at one time an eloquent manual of patriotism. About has also written studies in politics and finance, besides art criticisms, more brilliant than profound.

About's style is distinguished by its spirit and lucidity. He knows how to tell a story, and has great respect for his mother tongue. He was elected to the Academy in 1884, but died in 1885 without delivering his thesis.

WHICH WAS THE MADMAN?

THE STORY OF A STRANGE CASE

BY EDMOND ABOUT

I

ONE might pass Dr. Auvray's house twenty times without suspecting the miracles that are wrought there. It is a modest establishment near the end of Montaigne Avenue, between Prince Soltikoff's Gothic palace and the gymnasium. The unpretentious iron gates open into a small garden, filled with lilacs and rosebushes. The porter's lodge is on the left side of the gateway; the wing containing the doctor's office and the apartments of his wife and daughter are on the right; while the main building stands with its back to the street and its south windows overlook a small grove of horsechestnuts and lindens.

It is there that the doctor treats, and generally cures, cases of mental aberration. I would not introduce you into his house, however, if you incurred any risk of meeting frenzied lunatics or hopeless imbeciles. You will be spared all such harrowing sights. Dr. Auvray is a specialist, and treats cases of monomania only. He is an extremely kind-hearted man, endowed with plenty of shrewdness and good sense; a true philoso-

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pher, an untiring student, and an enthusiastic follower of the famous Esquirol.

Having come into possession of a small fortune soon after the completion of his medical course, he married, and founded the establishment which we have described. Had there been a spark of charlatanism in his composition, he could easily have amassed a fortune, but he had been content to merely earn a living. He shunned notoriety, and when he effected a wonderful cure, he never proclaimed it upon the housetops. His very enviable reputation had been acquired with out any effort on his part, and almost against his will. Would you have a proof of this? Well, his treatise on monomania, published by Baillière in 1852, has passed through six editions, though the author has never sent a single copy to the newspapers. Modesty is a good thing, certainly, but one may carry it too far. Mademoiselle Auvray will have a dowry of only twenty thousand francs, and she will be twenty-two in April.

About a month ago a hired coupé stopped in front of Dr. Auvray's door, from which two men alighted and entered the office. The servant asked them to be seated, and await his master's return.

One of the visitors was about fifty years of age, a tall, stout, dark-complexioned but ruddy-faced man, rather ungainly in figure and appearance. He had thick, stubby hands and enormous thumbs. Picture a laboring man, dressed in his employer's clothes, and you have M. Morlot.

His nephew, Francis Thomas, is a young man, about twenty-three years old; but it is very difficult to de-

scribe him, as there is nothing distinctive either in his manner or appearance. He is neither tall nor short, handsome nor ugly, stout nor thin—in short, he is commonplace and mediocre in every respect, with chestnut hair, and of an extremely retiring disposition, manner and attire. When he entered Dr. Auvray's office, he seemed to be greatly excited. He walked wildly to and fro, as if unable to remain in one place; looked at twenty different things in the same instant, and would certainly have handled them all if his hands had not been tied.

"Compose yourself, my dear Francis," said his uncle, soothingly. "What I am doing is for your own good. You will be perfectly comfortable and happy here, and the doctor is sure to cure you."

"I am not sick. There is nothing whatever the matter with me. Why have you tied my hands?"

"Because you would have thrown me out of the window, if I had not. You are not in your right mind, my poor boy, but Dr. Auvray will soon make you well again."

"I am as sane as you are, uncle; and I can't imagine what you mean. My mind is perfectly clear and my memory excellent. Shall I recite some poetry to you, or construe some Latin? I see there is a Tacitus here in the bookcase. Or, if you prefer, I will solve a problem in algebra or geometry. You don't desire it? Very well, then listen while I tell you what you have been doing this morning.

"You came to my room at eight o'clock, not to

wake me, for I was not asleep, but to get me out of bed. I dressed myself without any assistance from Germain. You asked me to accompany you to Dr. Auvray's; I refused; you insisted; then Germain aided you in tying my hands. I shall dismiss him this evening. I owe him thirteen days' wages; that is to say, thirteen francs, as I promised to pay him thirty francs a month. You, too, owe him something, as you are the cause of his losing his New Year's gift. Isn't this a tolerably clear statement of the facts? Do you still intend to try to make me out a lunatic? Ah, my dear uncle, let your better nature assert itself. Remember that my mother was your sister. What would my poor mother say if she saw me here? I bear you no ill-will, and everything can be amicably arranged. You have a daughter."

"Ah, there it is again. You must certainly see that you are not in your right mind. I have a daughter—I? Why, I am a bachelor, as you know perfectly well."

"You have a daughter—" repeated Francis, mechanically.

"My poor nephew, listen to me a moment. Have you a cousin?"

"A cousin? No, I have no cousin. Oh, you won't catch me there. I have no cousin, either male or female."

"But I am your uncle, am I not?"

"Yes; you are my uncle, of course, though you seem to have forgotten the fact this morning."

"Then if I had a daughter, she would be your

cousin; but as you have no cousin, I can have no daughter."

"You are right, of course. I had the pleasure of meeting her at Ems last summer with her mother; I love her; I have reason to believe that she is not indifferent to me, and I have the honor to ask you for her hand in marriage."

"Whose hand, may I ask?"

"Your daughter's hand."

"Just hear him," Morlot said to himself. "Dr. Auvray must certainly be very clever if he succeeds in curing him. I am willing to pay him six thousand francs a year for board and treatment. Six thousand francs from thirty thousand leaves twenty-four thousand. How rich I shall be! Poor Francis!"

He seated himself again, and picked up a book that chanced to be lying on a table near him.

"Calm yourself," he said soothingly, "and I will read you something. Try to listen. It may quiet you."

Opening the volume, he read as follows:

" 'Monomania is opinionativeness on one subject; a persistent clinging to one idea; the supreme ascendency of a single passion. It has its origin in the heart. To cure the malady, the cause must be ascertained and removed. It arises generally from love, fear, vanity, overweening ambition or remorse, and betrays itself by the same symptoms as any other passion; sometimes by boisterousness, gaiety, and garrulousness; sometimes by extreme timidity, melancholy, and silence.' "

As M. Morlot read on, Francis became more quiet, and at last appeared to fall into a peaceful slumber.

"Bravo!" thought the uncle, "here is a triumph of medical skill already. It has put to sleep a man who was neither hungry nor sleepy!"

Francis was not asleep, but he was feigning sleep to perfection. His head drooped lower and lower, and he regulated his heavy breathing with mathematical exactness. Uncle Morlot was completely deceived. He went on reading for some time in more and more subdued tones; then he yawned; then he stopped reading; then he let the book drop from his hands and closed his eyes, and in another minute he was sound asleep, to the intense delight of his nephew, who was watching him maliciously out of the corner of his eye.

Francis began operations by scraping his chair on the uncarpeted floor, but M. Morlot moved no more than a post. Francis then tramped noisily up and down the room, but his uncle snored the louder. Then the nephew approached the doctor's desk, picked up an eraser that was lying there, and with it finally succeeded in cutting the rope that bound his hands. On regaining his liberty he uttered a smothered exclamation of joy; then he cautiously approached his uncle. In two minutes, M. Morlot himself was securely bound, but it had been done so gently and so adroitly that his slumbers had not been disturbed in the least.

Francis stood admiring his work for a moment; then he stooped and picked up the book that had fallen to the floor. It was Dr. Auvray's treatise on mono-

mania. He carried it off into a corner of the room and began to read it with much apparent interest, while awaiting the doctor's coming.

II

It is necessary to revert briefly to the antecedents of this uncle and nephew. Francis Thomas was the only son of a former toy-merchant, on the Rue de Saumon. The toy trade is an excellent business, about one hundred per cent profit being realized on most of the articles; consequently, since his father's death, Francis had been enjoying that ease generally known as honest ease; possibly because it enables one to live without stooping to sordid acts; possibly, too, because it enables one to keep one's friends honest, also. In short, he had an income of thirty thousand francs a year.

His tastes were extremely simple, as I have said before. He detested show, and always selected gloves, waistcoats, and trousers of those sober hues shading from dark brown to black. He never carried an eye-glass for the very good reason, he said, that he had excellent eyesight; he wore no scarf-pin, because he needed no pin to hold his cravat securely; but the fact is, he was afraid of exciting comment. He would have been wretched had his sponsors bestowed upon him any save the most commonplace names; but, fortunately, his cognomens were as modest and unpretending as if he had chosen them himself.

His excessive modesty prevented him from adopt-

ing a profession. When he left college, he considered long and carefully the seven or eight different paths open before him. A legal career seemed to be attended with too much publicity; the medical profession was too exciting; business too complicated. The responsibilities of an instructor of youth were too onerous; the duties of a government official too confining and servile. As for the army, that was out of the question, not because he feared the enemy, but because he shuddered at the thought of wearing a uniform; so he finally decided to live on his income, not because it was the easiest thing to do, but because it was the most unobtrusive.

But it was in the presence of the fair sex that his weakness became most apparent. He was always in love with somebody. Whenever he attended a play or a concert he immediately began to gaze around him in search of a pretty face. If he found one to his taste, the play was admirable, the music perfection; if he failed, the whole performance was detestable, the actors murdered their lines, and all the singers sang out of tune. He worshiped these divinities in secret, however, for he never dared to speak to one of them.

When he fancied himself a victim to the tender passion, he spent the greater part of his time in composing the most impassioned declarations of love, which never passed his lips, however. In imagination he addressed the tenderest words of affection to his adored one, and revealed the innermost depths of his soul to her; he held long conversations with her, delightful interviews, in which he furnished both the

questions and answers. His burning protestations of undying love would have melted a heart of ice, but none of his divinities were ever aware of his aspirations and longings.

It chanced, however, in the month of August of that same year, about four months before he so adroitly bound his uncle's hands, that Francis had met at Ems a young lady almost as shy and retiring as himself, a young lady whose excessive timidity seemed to imbue him with some of the courage of an ordinary mortal. She was a frail, delicate *Parisienne* —pale as a flower that had blossomed in the shade, and with a skin as transparent as an infant's. She was at Ems in company with her mother, who had been advised to try the waters for an obstinate throat trouble, chronic laryngitis, if I remember right. The mother and daughter had evidently led a very secluded life, for they watched the noisy crowd with undisguised curiosity and amazement. Francis was introduced to them quite unexpectedly by one of his friends who was returning from Italy by way of Germany. After that, Francis was with them almost constantly for a month; in fact, he was their sole companion.

For sensitive, retiring souls, a crowd is the most complete of solitudes; the more people there are around them, the more persistently they retreat to a corner to commune with themselves. Of course, the mother and daughter soon became well acquainted with Francis, and they grew very fond of him. Like the navigator who first set foot on American soil, they discovered some new treasure every day. They never inquired

whether he was rich or poor; it was enough for them to know that he was good. Francis, for his part, was inexpressibly delighted with his own transformation. Have you ever heard how spring comes in the gardens of Russia? One day everything is shrouded in snow; the next day a ray of sunshine appears and puts grim winter to flight. By noon the trees are in bloom; by night they are covered with leaves; a day or two more and the fruit appears.

The heart of Francis underwent a similar metamorphosis. His reserve and apparent coldness disappeared as if by magic, and in a few short weeks the timid youth was transformed into a resolute, energetic man—at least to all appearances. I do not know which of the three persons first mentioned marriage, but that is a matter of no consequence. Marriage is always understood when two honest hearts avow their love.

Now Francis was of age, and undisputed master of himself and his possessions, but the girl he loved had a father whose consent must be obtained, and it was just here that this young man's natural timidity of disposition reasserted itself. True, Claire had said to him: "You can write to my father without any misgivings. He knows all about our attachment. You will receive his consent by return mail."

Francis wrote and rewrote his letter a hundred times, but he could not summon up the courage to send it.

Surely the ordeal was an easy one, and it would seem as though the most timorous mind could have passed through it triumphantly. Francis knew the

name, position, fortune, and even the disposition of his prospective father-in-law. He had been initiated into all the family secrets, he was virtually a member of the household. The only thing he had to do was to state in the briefest manner who he was and what he possessed. There was no doubt whatever as to the response; but he delayed so long that at the end of a month Claire and her mother very naturally began to doubt his sincerity. I think they would have waited patiently another fortnight, however, but the father would not permit it. If Claire loved the young man, and her lover was not disposed to make known his intentions, the girl must leave him at once. Perhaps Mr. Francis Thomas would then come and ask her hand in marriage. He knew where to find her.

Thus it chanced that, one morning when Francis went to invite the ladies to walk as usual, the proprietor of the hotel informed him that they had returned to Paris, and that their apartments were already occupied by an English family. This crushing blow, falling so unexpectedly, destroyed the poor fellow's reason, and, rushing out of the house like a madman, he began a frantic search for Claire in all the places where he had been in the habit of meeting her. At last he returned to his own hotel with a violent sick headache, which he proceeded to doctor in the most energetic manner. First he had himself bled, then he took baths in boiling hot water, and applied the most ferocious mustard plasters; in short, he avenged his mental tortures upon his innocent body. When he believed himself cured, he started for France, firmly resolved to have an in-

terview with Claire's father before even changing his clothes. He traveled with all possible speed, jumped off the train before it stopped, forgetting his baggage entirely, sprang into a cab, and shouted to the coachman:

"Drive to her home as quick as you can!"

"Where, sir?"

"To the house of Monsieur—on the—the Rue—I can't remember." He had forgotten the name and address of the girl he loved.

"I will go home," he said to himself, "and it will come back to me."

So he handed his card to the coachman, who took him to his own home.

His concierge was an aged man, with no children, and named Emmanuel. On seeing him, Francis bowed profoundly, and said:

"Sir, you have a daughter Mlle. Claire Emmanuel. I intended to write and ask you for her hand in marriage, but decided it would be more seemly to make the request in person."

They saw that he was mad, and his uncle Morlot, in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, was immediately summoned.

Now Uncle Morlot was the most scrupulously honest man on the Rue Charonne, which, by the way, is one of the longest streets in Paris. He manufactured antique furniture with conscientious care, but only mediocre skill. He was not a man to pass off ebonized pine for real ebony, or a cabinet of his own make for a medieval production; and yet, he understood the

art of making new wood look old and full of apparent worm-holes as well as anybody living; but it was a principle of his never to cheat or deceive any one. With almost absurd moderation for a follower of this trade, he limited his profits to five per cent over and above the expenses of the business, so he had gained more esteem than money. When he made out a bill, he invariably added up the items three times, so afraid was he of making a mistake in his own favor.

After thirty years of close attention to business he was very little better off than when he finished his apprenticeship. He had merely earned his living, just like the humblest of his workmen, and he often asked himself rather enviously how his brother-in-law had managed to acquire a competence. If this brother-in-law, with the natural arrogance of a *parvenu*, rather looked down on the poor cabinet-maker, the latter, with all the pride of a man who has not tried to succeed financially, esteemed himself all the more highly. He gloried in his poverty, as it were; and said to himself with plebeian pride: "I, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that I owe nothing to any one."

Man is a strange animal: I am not the first person who has made that remark. This most estimable M. Morlot, whose overscrupulous probity made him almost a laughing-stock, experienced a singular feeling of elation in his secret heart when he was apprised of his nephew's condition. An insinuating voice whispered softly: "If Francis is insane, you will become his guardian."

"You will be none the richer," responded Conscience, promptly.

"And why not?" persisted the Tempter. "The expenses of an insane person never amount to thirty thousand francs a year. Besides, you will be put to a great deal of trouble and have to neglect your business, very probably, so it is only right that you should receive some compensation. You will not be wronging any one by taking part of the money."

"But one ought to expect no compensation for such services to a member of one's family," retorted the voice of Conscience.

"Then why have the members of our family never done anything for me? I have been in straitened circumstances again and again, and have found it almost impossible to meet my obligations, but neither my nephew Francis nor his deceased father ever rendered me the slightest assistance."

"Nonsense," replied his better nature; "this attack of insanity is nothing serious. Francis will be himself again in a few days."

"It is just as probable that the malady will wear him out and that you will come into possession of the entire property," persisted the wily Tempter.

The worthy cabinet-maker tried to close his ears to the insidious voice, but his ears were so large that the subtle, persistent voice glided in, despite all his efforts. The establishment on the Rue Charonne was intrusted to the care of the foreman, and the uncle took up his abode in his nephew's comfortable apartments. He slept in an excellent bed, and enjoyed it very much; he

sat down to a well-spread table, and the indigestion, which had tormented him for years, vanished as if by enchantment. He was waited upon and shaved by Germain, his nephew's valet, and he speedily came to regard such attentions as a necessity. Gradually, too, he became accustomed to seeing his nephew in this deplorable condition, and to quite reconcile himself to the idea that he would never be cured, but all the while he kept repeating to himself, as if to ease his conscience, "I am wronging nobody."

At the expiration of three months he had become very tired of having an insane person shut up in the house with him—for he had long since begun to consider himself at home—and his nephew's incessant maundering, and continual requests for Mlle. Claire's hand in marriage, became an intolerable bore. He therefore resolved to get rid of him by placing him in Dr. Auvray's insane asylum.

"After all, my nephew will be much better cared for there," he said to himself, "and I shall be much easier in mind. Every one admits that the best way to divert a lunatic's mind is to give him a change of scene, so I am only doing my duty."

It was with this very thought in his mind that he fell asleep just before Francis bound his hands. What an awakening was his!

The doctor entered with a smiling excuse for his long delay. Francis rose, laid his book on the table, and proceeded with volubility to explain the business that had brought him there.

"It is my uncle on my mother's side that I desire to

intrust to your care," he began. "He is, as you see, a man between forty-five and fifty years of age, accustomed to manual labor and the economy and privations of a humble and busy life; moreover, he was born of healthy, hard-working parents, in a family where no case of mental aberration was ever before known. You will not, therefore, be obliged to contend with a hereditary malady. His is probably one of the most peculiar cases of monomania that has ever come under your observation. His mood changes almost instantaneously from one of extreme gaiety to profound melancholy. In fact, it is a strange compound of monomania and melancholy."

"He has not lost his reason entirely?"

"Oh, no; he is never violent; in fact, he is insane upon one subject only."

"What is the nature of his malady?"

"Alas! the besetting sin of the age, sir; cupidity. He has become deeply imbued with the spirit of our times. After working hard from childhood, he finds himself still comparatively poor, while my father, who began life under like circumstances, was able to leave me a snug little fortune. My uncle began by being envious of me; then the thought occurred to him that, being my only relative, he would become my heir in case of my death, and my guardian in case I became insane; and as it is very easy for a weak-minded person to believe whatever he desires to believe, the unfortunate man soon persuaded himself that I had lost my reason. He has told everybody that this is the case; and he will soon tell you so. In the carriage,

though his hands were tied, he really believed that it was he who was bringing me here."

"When did this malady first show itself?"

"About three months ago. He came to my concierge and said to him, in the wildest manner: 'Monsieur Emmanuel, you have a daughter. Let me in, and then come and assist me in binding my nephew.'"

"Is he aware of his condition? Does he know that his mind is affected?"

"No, sir, and I think that is a favorable sign. I should add, however, that his physical health is somewhat impaired, and he is much troubled with indigestion and insomnia."

"So much the better; an insane person who sleeps and eats regularly is generally incurable. Suppose you allow me to wake him."

Dr. Auvray placed his hand gently on the shoulder of the sleeper, who instantly sprang to his feet. The first movement he made was to rub his eyes. When he discovered that his hands were tied, he instantly suspected what had taken place while he was asleep, and burst into a hearty laugh.

"A good joke, a very good joke!" he exclaimed.

Francis drew the doctor a little aside.

"Sir, in five minutes he will be in a towering rage," he whispered.

"Let me manage him. I know how to take him."

The good doctor smiled on the supposed patient as one smiles on a child one wishes to amuse. "Well, you wake in very good spirits, my friend; did you have a pleasant dream?" he asked affably.

"No, I had no dream at all; I'm merely laughing to find myself tied up like a bundle of fagots. One would suppose that I was the madman, instead of my nephew."

"There, I told you so," whispered Francis.

"Have the goodness to untie my hands, doctor. I can explain better when I am free."

"I will unbind you, my friend, but you must promise to give no trouble."

"Can it be, doctor, that you really take me for an insane person?"

"No, my friend, but you are ill, and we will take care of you, and, I hope, cure you. See, your hands are free; don't abuse your liberty."

"What the devil do you imagine I'll do? I came here merely to bring my nephew."

"Very well, we will talk about that matter by and by. I found you sound asleep. Do you often fall asleep in the daytime?"

"Never! It was that stupid book that—"

"Oh, oh! This is a serious case," muttered the author of the book referred to. "So you really believe that your nephew is insane?"

"Dangerously so, doctor. The fact that I was obliged to bind his hands with this very rope is proof of that."

"But it was your hands that were bound. Don't you recollect that I just untied them?"

"But let me explain—"

"Gently, gently, my friend, you are becoming excited. Your face is very red; I don't want you to

fatigue yourself. Just be content to answer my questions. You say that your nephew is ill?"

"Mad, mad, mad, I tell you!"

"And it pleases you to see him mad?"

"What?"

"Answer me frankly. You don't wish him to be cured, do you?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because his fortune is under your control. Don't you wish to be rich? Are you not disappointed and discouraged because you have toiled so long without making a fortune? Don't you very naturally think that your turn has come now?"

M. Morlot made no reply. His eyes were riveted on the floor. He asked himself if he was not dreaming, and tried his best to decide how much of this whole affair was real, and how much imaginary, so completely bewildered was he by the questions of this stranger, who read his heart as if it had been an open book.

"Do you ever hear voices?" inquired Dr. Auvray.

Poor M. Morlot felt his hair stand on end, and remembering that relentless voice that was ever whispering in his ear, he replied mechanically, "Sometimes."

"Ah, he is the victim of an hallucination," murmured the doctor.

"No, there is nothing whatever the matter with me, I tell you. Let me get out of here. I shall be as crazy as my nephew if I remain much longer. Ask my friends. They will all tell you that I am perfectly

sane. Feel my pulse. You can see that I have no fever."

"Poor uncle!" murmured Francis. "He doesn't know that insanity is delirium unattended with fever."

"Yes," added the doctor, "if we could only give our patients a fever, we could cure every one of them."

M. Morlot sank back despairingly in his armchair. His nephew began to pace the floor.

"I am deeply grieved at my uncle's deplorable condition," he remarked feelingly, "but it is a great consolation to me to be able to intrust him to the care of a man like yourself. I have read your admirable treatise on monomania. It is the most valuable work of the kind that has appeared since the publication of the great Esquirol's Treatise upon Mental Diseases. I know, moreover, that you are truly a father to your patients, so I will not insult you by commending M. Morlot to your special care. As for the compensation you are to receive, I leave that entirely to you."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket-book a thousand-franc note and laid it on the mantel. "I shall do myself the honor to call again some time during the ensuing week. At what hour are your patients allowed to see visitors?"

"From twelve to two, only; but I am always at home. Good day, sir."

"Stop him! stop him!" shouted Uncle Morlot. "Don't let him go. He is the one that is mad; I will tell you all about it."

"Calm yourself, my dear uncle," said Francis, start-

ing toward the door. "I leave you in Dr. Auvray's care; he will soon cure you, I trust."

M. Morlot sprang up to intercept his nephew, but the doctor detained him.

"What a strange fatality!" cried the poor uncle. "He has not uttered a single senseless remark. If he would only rave as usual, you would soon see that I am not the one who is mad, but—"

Francis already had his hand on the door-knob, but turning suddenly, he retraced his steps as if he had forgotten something and, walking straight up to the doctor, said:

"My uncle's malady was not the only thing that brought me here."

"Ah," murmured M. Morlot, seeing a ray of hope, at last.

"You have a daughter," continued the young man.

"At last!" shouted the poor uncle. "You are a witness to the fact that he said: 'You have a daughter.'"

"Yes," replied the doctor, addressing Francis. "Will you kindly explain—"

"You have a daughter, Mlle. Claire Auvray."

"There, there! didn't I tell you so?" cried the uncle.

"Yes," again replied the doctor.

"She was at Ems three months ago with her mother."

"Bravo! Bravo!" yelled M. Morlot.

"Yes," responded the physician for the third time.

M. Morlot rushed up to the doctor, and cried: "You are not the doctor, but a patient in the house."

"My friend, if you are not more quiet we shall have to give you a douche."

M. Morlot recoiled in terror. His nephew continued calmly:

"I love your daughter, sir; I have some hope that I am loved in return, and if her feelings have not changed since the month of September, I have the honor to ask her hand in marriage."

"Is it to Monsieur Francis Thomas that I have the honor of speaking?" inquired the doctor.

"The same, sir. I should have begun by telling you my name."

"Then you must permit me to say, sir, that you have been guilty of no unseemly haste—"

But just then the good doctor's attention was diverted by M. Morlot, who was rubbing his hands in a frenzied manner.

"What is the matter with you, my friend?" the doctor asked in his kind, fatherly way.

"Nothing, nothing! I am only washing my hands. There is something on them that troubles me."

"Show me what it is. I don't see anything."

"Can't you see it? There, there, between my fingers. I see it plainly enough."

"What do you see?"

"My nephew's money. Take it away, doctor. I'm an honest man; I don't want anything that belongs to anybody else."

While the physician was listening attentively to M. Morlot's first ravings, an extraordinary change took place in Francis. He became as pale as death, and

seemed to be suffering terribly from cold, for his teeth chattered so violently that Dr. Auvray turned and asked what was the matter with him.

"Nothing," he replied. "She is coming, I hear her! It is joy, but it overpowers me. It seems to be falling on me and burying me beneath its weight like a snow-drift. Winter will be a dreary time for lovers. Oh, doctor, see what is the matter with my head!"

But his uncle rushed up to him, crying:

"Enough, enough! Don't rave so! I don't want people to think you mad. They will say I stole your reason from you. I'm an honest man. Doctor, look at my hands, examine my pockets, send to my house on the Rue Charonne. Search the cupboard. Open all the drawers. You will find I have nothing that belongs to any other person."

Between his two patients the doctor was at his wits' end, when a door opened, and Claire came in to tell her father that breakfast was on the table.

Francis leaped up out of his chair, as if moved by a spring, but though his will prompted him to rush toward Mlle. Auvray, his flesh proved weak, and he fell back in his chair like lead. He could scarcely murmur the words:

"Claire, it is I! I love you. Will you— "

He passed his hand over his forehead. His pale face became a vivid scarlet. His temples throbbed almost to bursting; it seemed to him that an iron band was contracting more and more around his head, just above his brows. Claire, frightened nearly to death, seized both his hands; his skin was so dry, and his pulse so

rapid that the poor girl was terrified. It was not thus that she had hoped to see him again. In a few minutes, a yellowish tinge appeared about his nostrils; nausea ensued, and Dr. Auvray recognized all the symptoms of a bilious fever.

"How unfortunate!" he said to himself. "If this fever had only attacked his uncle, it would have cured him!"

He rang. A servant appeared, and shortly afterward Mme. Auvray, who scarcely knew Francis, so greatly had he changed. It was necessary that the sick man should be got to bed without delay, and Claire relinquished her own pretty room to him. While they were installing him there, his uncle wandered excitedly about the parlor, tormenting the doctor with questions, embracing the sick man, seizing Mme. Auvray's hand and exclaiming wildly: "Save him, save him! He shall not die! I will not have him die! I forbid it. I have a right to. I am his uncle and guardian. If you do not care for him, people will say I killed him. You are witnesses to the fact that I ask for none of his property! I shall give all his possessions to the poor! Some water—please give me some water to wash my hands!" He was taken to the building occupied by the patients, where he became so violent that it was necessary to put him in a straitjacket.

Mme. Auvray and her daughter nursed Francis with the tenderest care. Confined in the sick-room day and night, the mother and daughter spent most of their leisure time discussing the situation. They could not

explain the lover's long silence or his sudden reappearance. If he loved Claire, why had he left her in suspense for three dreary months? Why did he feel obliged to give his uncle's malady an excuse for presenting himself at Dr. Auvray's house? But if he had recovered from his infatuation, why did he not take his uncle to some other physician? There were plenty of them in Paris. Possibly he had believed himself cured of his folly until the sight of Claire undeceived him? But no, he had asked her father for her hand in marriage before he saw her again. But, in his delirium, Francis answered all or nearly all of these questions. Claire, bending tenderly over him, listened breathlessly to his every word, and afterward repeated them to her mother and to the doctor, who was not long in discovering the truth. They soon knew that he had lost his reason and under what circumstances; they even learned how he had been the innocent cause of his uncle's insanity. Fears of an entirely different nature now began to assail Mlle. Auvray. Was the terrible crisis which she had unwittingly brought about likely to cure his mental disorder? The doctor assured his daughter that a fever, under such circumstances, was almost certain to put an end to the insanity, but there is no rule without its exception, especially in medicine. And even if he seemed to be cured, was there not danger of a recurrence of the malady?

"So far as I am concerned, I am not in the least afraid," said Claire, smiling sadly. "I am the cause of all his troubles. Therefore, it is my duty to console him. After all, his madness consists merely in

continually asking my hand. There will be no need of doing that after I become his wife, so we really have nothing to fear. The poor fellow lost his reason through his excessive love; so cure him, my dear father, but not entirely. Let him remain insane enough to love me as much as I love him!"

"We will see," replied Dr. Auvray. "Wait until this fever passes off. If he seems ashamed of having been demented, if he appears gloomy, or melancholy after his recovery, I can not vouch for him; if, on the contrary, he remembers his temporary aberration of mind without mortification or regret—if he speaks of it without any reserve, and if he is not averse to seeing the persons who nursed him through his illness, there is not the slightest reason to apprehend a return of the malady."

On the 25th of December, Francis, fortified by a cup of chicken broth and half the yolk of a soft boiled egg, sat up in bed, and without the slightest hesitancy or mortification, and in a perfectly lucid manner, gave the history of the past three months without any emotion save that of quiet joy. Claire and Mme. Auvray wept as they listened to him; the doctor pretended to be taking notes, or rather to be writing under dictation, but something besides ink fell on the paper. When the story ended, the convalescent added, by way of conclusion:

"And now on this, the 25th day of December, I say to my good doctor, and much loved father—Dr. Auvray, whose street and number I shall never again forget—'Sir, you have a daughter, Mlle. Claire Au-

vray, whom I met at Ems, with her mother. I love her; she has proved that she loves me in return, and if you have no fears that I will become insane again, I have the honor to ask her hand in marriage."

The doctor was so deeply affected that he could only bow his head in token of assent, but Claire put her arms around the sick man's neck and kissed him tenderly on the forehead. I am sure I should desire no better response under like circumstances.

That same day, M. Morlot, who had become much more quiet and tractable, and who had long since been released from the bondage of a straitjacket, rose about eight o'clock in the morning, as usual. On getting out of bed, he picked up his slippers, examined and reexamined them inside and out, then handed them to a nurse for inspection, begging him to see for himself that they contained no thirty thousand francs. Until positively assured of this fact he would not consent to put them on. Then he carefully shook each of his garments out of the window, but not until after he had searched every fold and pocket in them. After his toilet was completed, he called for a pencil, and wrote on the walls of his chamber:

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's money, nor anything that is his."

Dr. Auvray is confident of his ability to cure him, but it will take time. It is in the summer and autumn that physicians are most successful in their endeavors to cure insanity.

THE GRAND MARRIAGE

BY LUDOVIC HALÉVY



Ludovic Halévy was born at Paris in 1834, and began to write for the theatre when very young. He is the author of the opera librettos, "Orphée aux Enfers," 1861, "Carmen," 1875, etc.; besides a number of vaudevilles, such as "Froufrou," etc. Most of his pieces are written in collaboration with Meilhac. Outside of the theatre he has published a collection of little scenes in the paper called "La Vie Parisienne," under the title of "Madame Cardinal" and "Les Petits Cardinal"; impressions of war under the title "L'Invasion," and some novels, such as "L'Abbé Constantin," 1882. In 1884 he was elected a member of the Academy.

Halévy tempered the fantastic humors of Meilhac, and restrained the more far-fetched of his own, bringing them down to earth. His theatre paints what is called Parisian life, remarkable for ease, delicacy, grace, but without much substance. His novels have a very delicate flavor, with a combination of suavity and irony.

THE GRAND MARRIAGE

BY LUDOVIC HALÉVY

Nov. 25th, 1893. 4 *o'clock.*

THIS morning at ten o'clock I was just settling down to attack Beethoven's Twenty-fifth symphony, when the door opened, and who should walk in but mama. Mama awake and stirring at ten o'clock! And not only awake and stirring, but dressed and ready to go out—mantled and bonneted.

I could not remember ever to have seen her stirring so early before. She never manages to get to church on Sunday before the middle of the one o'clock mass. The other evening she said, laughingly, to Abbé Pontal:

"Monsieur l'Abbé, our dear religion would be absolutely perfect if you substituted a mass at two for that at one. Then the concerts at the *Conservatoire* could be put an hour later, and Sunday in winter would be all that could be desired."

At mama's entrance I was stupefied, and exclaimed: "You are going out, mama?"

"No, I've just come in."

"You've just come in?"

"Yes, I had something to do this morning—to choose some stuffs for the hangings—that blue, you know, which is so difficult to find."

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"Have you found it?"

"No—no. But that they say they can get it for me —and I hope that— They are going to send it by the day after to-morrow at the latest."

Mama got quite confused in her explanation. She finally announced that we were going to a *soirée* at the Mercerey's. There was to be a little music. She had known of it for several days, but had forgotten to mention it to me before. I didn't show the slightest sign of surprise, but while listening to mama, I studied her carefully, and thought to myself: "What's the meaning of all this? Mama rambling about at this unearthly hour, matching blues! A *soirée musicale* at the Mercerey's! Mama evidently confused, too! There's something hidden."

So I let her flounder and never uttered a sound. When she had finished she took a few steps toward the door, just as actors do in a theatre when they pretend they are going out, then she turned back and tried to say with an air of indifference, as if the thought had only just occurred to her: "Which gown do you think of putting on to-night?"

"To-night, mama? Really, I don't know. I might put the gray on—or the blue—or the rose."

"No, no; not the rose. Put the blue on. You looked quite nice in it the day before yesterday at Aunt Clarice's. Besides, your papa doesn't like the rose, and as he is going with us to the Mercerey's—"

"Papa going to the Mercerey's!"

"Yes, certainly."

"Does he know that there's to be some music?"

"Yes."

"He knows—and yet he is going?"

"Yes. What is there surprising in that?"

"Oh, nothing, mama; nothing at all."

Whereupon she really left the room, and I was quite alone. Then, without a moment's hesitation, I said to myself: "A marriage on the *tapis*. They're going to show me off to some one. *That's* why pap is obliged to go."

Fancy papa letting himself be dragged by mama to a *soirée musicale!* The whole world will seem topsy-turvy. There are only three places which he finds bearable in the evening—the club, the opera during the ballet, and the little theatres where people go to laugh and amuse themselves generally—the theatres where young girls are not allowed to go, but where I intend to go when I am married.

Yes, I'm sure there's an interview in the wind. It must be something of great importance, for mama has been in a state of the highest excitement ever since this morning. She ate no breakfast, and didn't manage to conceal her unrest at all. Not only has she inspected my blue dress carefully, but she has also examined me with equal thoroughness. She fell into a fit of veritable despair on verifying the fact that there was a slight flaw on my features.

"What's that?" she cried.

"Where? What? mama!"

"On the tip of your nose."

"Have I anything on the tip of my nose?"

"Yes, a horrid gash."

"Oh, good gracious! A gash?"

Quite horrified, I rushed to the mirror. Then I breathed freely again. It was the merest trifle—where the kitten had given me a pat with its paw. Nothing worth mentioning—a little reddish mark that was hardly visible to the naked eye, and which could easily be got rid of before evening.

But in mama's solicitous eyes the little mark assumed the proportions of a disfiguring wound. The tip of my nose has never received so much touching attention before. Mama made me sit still in an armchair during half of the day, with cold-water cloths fixed like a pair of goggles on the said tip of the aforementioned nose.

Poor mama! She's so anxious to see me married. It's quite natural, after all. She looks very well herself yet in the evening, and it is awkward to have to drag a big marriageable daughter around at her heels.

I don't like it, either, for that matter. I know that I make her look older, and, therefore, as soon as we enter a room in the evening I slip away from her, and try to see as little as possible of her afterward until the carriage is announced. So each goes her own way, and interferes as little as possible with the other.

She's a dear, good old soul. There are mothers who simply bully their daughters, and worry them into marrying at five minutes' notice. Quite a leap in the dark. Mama isn't one of them.

Besides, she knows I have made up my mind not to be hurried—and not to decide carelessly. Marriage

is not a trifling thing. If a mistake is made it is for life; so it's well to know what one is doing when one takes the plunge. When I get married it will be in all seriousness. I don't intend to tumble head over ears in love with the first newcomer, be he fair or dark, who says to his mother: "I've found the girl of my choice. I love her, and her alone. I'll have her or nobody."

Oh, no! I'm not going into that stupidity. I intend to keep my eyes open, and my wits about me.

Last spring I declined five very likely wooers simply because none of them offered all the advantages of birth, fortune, and position which I consider I am justified in demanding.

I shall follow the same course of action during the winter campaign—the same calm prudence. I am not yet twenty, so I can afford to wait.

Since this morning I have felt highly satisfied with myself—*very* highly satisfied. I have not been in the least affected by mother's open agitation. To-day, as usual, I have glanced through my notes.

On my eighteenth birthday I find I wrote the following simple words on the first page of my notebook, which I still keep carefully under lock and key:

MY MARRIAGE.

"And so five have bitten the dust already." I'm sure there'll be a sixth combatant in the lists to-night. Is he the one who will finally become my very humble and very obedient servant and lord?

In any case, he had better get ready to undergo the most rigorous and searching examination.

I'm not like mama. I don't lose *my* head.

Nov. 26th. Four o'clock.

I wasn't mistaken. It *was* the sixth.

But let me be orderly, and write the events, both small and great, in their due sequence.

After dinner mama and I went upstairs to dress. I took a long time over it, and was very careful, too. I may as well tell the truth. I worked at my toilet. It took me an hour and a half to dress to my own complete satisfaction. On coming downstairs I found all the doors open, and as I noiselessly approached the drawing-room I heard papa and mama talking. Papa said:

"You think it *absolutely* necessary, then?"

"*Absolutely* necessary. Just think of it. Your presence is indispensable."

The temptation was too great. I stopped to listen. Was it not right, or at least justifiable curiosity on my part?

"Why indispensable?" replied papa. "I know the young fellow. I've often met him at the club. I've even played whist with him. He doesn't play badly, either. He saw Irene on horseback, and thought she was superb. That settles the whole affair as far as I am concerned. What business is it of mine? It's only your affair—your's and Irene's.

"My dear, I assure you that propriety demands—"

"Well, well; I'll go, I'll go."

Then silence fell. Not another word was spoken. I waited to hear the man's name, but it didn't come. My heart beat a little quicker as I stood there in expectancy—in fact, I distinctly heard its tick-tack. I stood two or three minutes, but as they did not think fit to resume the conversation, I entered, and had to pretend to know nothing.

But I did know something, and that something was of importance, too. He is a member of the "Jockey." To me that means everything. If I attach too much importance to it, it is papa's fault, for he thinks that any one who is not a member of the Jockey is simply nobody. The world, as far as papa is concerned, begins with the Jockey, and ends at those who are not of the charmed circle. I have been brought up with those ideas. My husband must be a member of the Jockey.

Well, the three of us set off in the landau—papa gloomy, depressed, silent; mama in the same state of eager excitement; I outwardly cool and indifferent, but thinking hard all the same.

What could be the meaning of so much mystery? This gentleman has seen me on horseback, and had though I was bewitching, which was very sweet of him. Was it he who had asked to see me in a brilliantly-lighted room—*décolletée?*

That, it seemed to me, was scarcely the correct thing. He ought to have been shown to *me* before I was so liberally shown to him on horseback and on foot. But, after all, it didn't matter much.

We got to the Mercerey's at half-past ten. I was

very sorry for papa, for it really was a *soirée musicale,* and there was a quartet, too, which is about the most trying thing in the world for one who does not care for music, and has not been broken in into bearing it. In addition, the music was highly and wearily classical.

There were not many people present—only about a score. The company was very mixed, and it was evident that the affair had been arranged in a hurry, for the people seemed to have been picked up haphazard, with no thought for their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies—nobody knew anybody, and there was an evident lack of sympathy.

We entered just when the andante movement of a sonata was in full swing, and we went on tiptoe to seats. I settled myself snugly in a quiet corner and cast a rapid, furtive glance round the battlefield. At first I only saw a few old men—*blasé* looking individuals—evidently not for me.

Then, in the opposite corner, I noticed a little knot of four young men. There could be no doubt that there was the enemy.

Yes, but which of the four? In my simplicity I thought: "It must be he who is looking at me most devotedly and attentively." I modestly lowered my eyes, and assumed the attitude of a saint listening with inward rapture to the austere strains of a Haydn sonata.

Then suddenly I raised my eyes and let them fall full upon the group of young men. But I had to drop them more quickly than I had raised them, for all the four young men were studying me with an equal

amount of curiosity and evident approbation. I let the sonata go a little longer, and again renewed the experiment—with the same result. The four pairs of eyes were fixed unflinchingly upon me.

I don't think I was much put out by so much attention. In fact, I wasn't at all put out. It was pleasant, very pleasant; and I rather liked it than otherwise.

The country did wonders for me last summer. I have grown a little—ever so little—fatter. Virginie, my maid, said to me the other evening while dressing me:

"Ah! Mademoiselle, you don't know how the summer has improved you." In which Virginie was very much mistaken. Mademoiselle *did* know it very well. One always notices such things first one's self.

The quartet at last came to an end, and the usual confusion of tongues followed. I took mama aside and said:

"Mama, do point him out."

"Why, you little minx, have you guessed?"

"Yes, I've guessed. Show me him — quick — the music's going to start again."

"That's he—the tall dark man, on the left there—the man standing under the Meissonnier. Don't look just now. He's looking at you."

"He's not the only one. They're all doing that."

"He's not looking now, though. There he is. He's going to papa. He's talking to him."

"He's not bad looking."

"I should rather think he isn't!"

"But his mouth's too large."

"*I* don't think so."

"Oh, yes it is. But that's a trifle. On the whole, he'll do."

"Oh, if you only knew all—birth, fortune, everything you could wish for. It was such an extraordinary accident, too—quite romantic."

"What's his name?"

"Comte de Martelle-Simieuse. Don't look at him; he's beginning to look at you again. As I was saying, he is a Martelle-Simieuse, and the Martelle-Simieuses are cousins of the Landry-Simieuses and of the Martelle-Jonzacs. You know the Martelle-Simieuses?"

At this point one of the musicians tapped on his desk, and mama's flow of genealogical eloquence was stopped. We resumed our seats, and the music commenced. Mozart this time. I sank back into my corner and settled down to my reflections. It was evident to me that he must be a splendid catch, for mama was so excited.

Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. Two names. Just what I had dreamt of and longed for. Of course, I should have preferred to be a duchess; but then there are so few real dukes left—only twenty-two, I believe—so that is practically out of the question. But a countess is passable.

Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. The name would sound well, I thought, and I repeated it several times to convince myself. I paid no attention whatever to Mozart. At first I scarcely realized that the musicians were playing Mozart—it might have been Wagner.

All that I knew was that the musicians were playing a melody which seemed to fit in with the words: "Madame la Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse."

After all a name *is* a matter of great importance, and particularly a name which goes well with a title. He is titled as well as a member of the "Jockey." *He* must be titled. I wouldn't become plain "Madame"—no, not for a fabulous fortune. Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. Yes, certainly, that sounded very well.

When the quartette was over the conversation was renewed. Papa turned toward mama, so did I. As soon as I reached her, she said, excitedly: "The affair is marching splendidly. He has asked to be introduced to you, and papa noticed that his voice trembled—didn't it?"

"Yes," replied papa, "his voice trembled."

"Your papa is going to bring him up to introduce him. If you are not satisfied with him, don't stay at my side. If you are satisfied, stay."

"Of course I shall stay, mama; but it must be understood that I shall have due time for reflection afterward. You have promised not to hurry me."

"You will be quite free. But don't forget that it is a chance in a hundred thousand. If you only knew his relatives, and how well they are married. His mother was a Précigny-Laroche. Think of that! A P—"

"Yes, yes. I see."

"There is no better blood than that of the Précigny-Laroches."

"Keep calm, mama. Don't get so excited. People

are looking at you." Then papa fetched him, and we had a nice chat in the interval. It was evident that he was affected. He had had courage to stare at me from a distance, but close at hand he daren't look at me. I had to lead the conversation, and I managed in ten minutes, while chatting apparently about the most trivial topics, to learn all that was absolutely necessary that I should know before letting things go farther.

He loves Paris—so do I. He detests the country—so do I. He thinks Trouville is very amusing—so do I. He doesn't like shooting—nor do I. On the other hand, he is passionately fond of horses and hunting—just as I am. It is well that we agree on that point. How many times have I said to myself, "My husband will have a hunting-seat." He has one. He rents a forest which is only ten leagues from Paris. You leave Paris at half-past eight in the morning from the Gare du Nord—the most convenient of stations—and at half-past ten you are on horseback. And unless the hunt is a very long one, you are back in Paris in the evening for the theatre or a ball.

Then again, his time, his fortune, as well as he himself, are entirely at his own disposal. He has neither father nor mother. He has only a younger brother, who is at present serving in an artillery regiment, and a very rich and very old aunt, who has no children. So he is the head of the family. Martelle-Simieuse belongs to him. It is an estate somewhere out in Vendée. Of course, I have not the remotest idea of going and burying myself out in Vendée for half of the year;

but it's quite necessary to have a country seat, and Vendée is just as good as anywhere else.

All which information I picked up in the short space of ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at the outside. Madame Mercerey, seeing that we were engaged in a serious conversation, lengthened the interval for the benefit of us four—I might say of us three, for papa never uttered a word—might even say of us two, for mama didn't say much either.

All the information I obtained by skilfully turning the conversation in the most natural manner, and without asking a single question.

This morning mama told me that she was absolutely shocked at my calmness and precision last night. Yes, I have a practical side to my nature. I am anxious to place my life in certain unassailable conditions of independence and security, without which there could be neither happiness nor love, nor anything else worth having.

For instance, I'm determined not to have a mother-in-law. I don't know what I wouldn't give *not* to have a mother-in-law. I don't intend to have to quarrel with one. At home a wife should be at home, and only have her husband to deal with.

It was on account of that decision that I rejected the little Marquis de Marillac last year. He was one of the five. I could have loved him; really, I had already begun to. Then I saw his mother. Then I stopped.

She was a terrible creature—strict, lugubrious, and ferociously *dévote*. She expected her daughter-in-law to go and bury herself in the depths of Bretagne for

eight months out of the twelve. Certainly, it would have been a saving—but at what a cost! What slavery! Besides, what would be the good of getting married, if, the day after leaving girlhood, the wife had to become a child and go back into leading-strings again the next day?

Now let me see. Where was I? I've really quite forgotten. Oh, I remember. The music began again, as I said. It was the last piece. We four sat down in a row in the following order: I, mama, papa, and he. It was scarcely an hour before that I had first set eyes on him, and we were already quite a little family party, we four, sitting stupidly and stiffly in a straight line on our chairs.

Some short waltzes of Beethoven were played, with intervals of one minute between. During the first interval mother said to me:

"Well, what do you think of him, now that you have seen him?"

"The same as before, mama."

"Is he all right?"

"He'll do."

"Then your father may venture to ask him to dinner?"

"Wouldn't that be hurrying matters rather too much?"

"We must hurry matters."

"Why, mama?"

"Sh! They're going to begin again."

I was somewhat put out. What was the reason for such unseemly haste? I was quite shocked by it. It

seemed really as if I were being thrown at the gentleman's head. I was in a hurry to know the why and the wherefore. I thought the concert would never end.

After ages of waiting the second interval came, and I began again:

"Mama, tell me why."

"I can't tell you anything just now. It would take too long. I'll tell you all presently, when we get home. But if he's invited it must be to-night; and there's not a minute to lose—yes or no?"

"Mama, you're hurrying me."

"No, I'm not hurrying you. You are at liberty to decline."

"Very well, then—yes."

"Dinner on Thursday?"

"Thursday will do very well."

Between the third and fourth waltzes, mama said hurriedly to papa:

"Invite him to dinner."

"What day?"

"Thursday."

"All right."

Papa has behaved with admirable docility and resignation. I never saw him in such a serious *rôle* before. It is true that the music seemed to bewilder him so that he scarcely knew what he was doing. I felt restless, and thought: "There, now, he'll go and invite the wrong one." Nothing of the sort. He gave the invitation quite correctly, and it was accepted with enthusiasm.

We left at midnight, and before we had fairly got away from Mercerey's I said to mama:

"I see clearly that you are as anxious as possible that I should accept this man."

"Certainly."

"Then tell me—"

"Just let me get my breath first. I am quite exhausted. I'll tell you everything when we get home."

An hour later I knew all. It was the most extraordinary thing in the world. Yesterday morning at eight o'clock a maid awoke mama, and gave her a note marked "Important." It was from Madame de Mercerey, and was as follows:

"I have a *migraine* and can not leave my room. Come—come at once to see me. A splendid stroke of luck for Irene."

Mama at once got up and went to Madame Mercerey.

But I must leave the rest till to-morrow. We dine at eight o'clock.

November 27th.

Well, mama went off post-haste, and this is what she heard from Madame Mercerey: "The two Martelle-Simieuses, the elder, Adrien (he's mine), and the younger, Paul, lost their grandmother ten years ago. She was an excellent old lady—very rich and very crotchety. She had one fixed idea—that of ensuring the perpetuity of her family. She seemed to imagine that if the Martelle-Simieuses became extinct the world

would of necessity come to an end. She was not by any means stupid, and she caused a very ingenious and peculiar clause to be inserted in her will, by which she set aside 1,000,000 francs, which sum, together with the accumulated interest, was to go to her grandson Adrien if he married before reaching the age of twenty-five. If he failed to marry within the time stipulated, it passed to his brother Paul, on the same conditions. If both brothers insisted on remaining bachelors the money went to the poor. The trifle thus set aside now amounts to the respectable sum of one and a half millions. Adrien showed no inclination to marry, but was addicted to sport, and wished above all to maintain his independence. 'I will not marry,' he used to say. 'I have an income of 180,000 francs, and that's enough for me. With a little care and economy I can make both ends meet.' In short, he regarded the approach of the fatal 10th of January with perfect complacency, although he knew that on that day he would be twenty-five."

Toward the end of last year there was a great speculating craze in our set—a sort of commercial crusade against the infidel Jews. Adrien plunged into speculation, not so much for the sake of gain as for excitement, and to do good. He assisted in an attempt to maintain the credit of a certain bank which was hard pressed.

In the crash that ensued the poor fellow lost heavily —1,400,000 francs. So his income was reduced to 80,000, and naturally he was very much pinched. But he wasn't by any means depressed. He showed a brave

face to misfortune, and at once set to work to reduce his expenditure by dismissing some of his servants and selling some of his horses.

His resolution not to marry remained unaltered. But about a month ago some of his friends undertook to show him the error of his ways. They pointed out how absurd it was to stupidly let such a fortune slip from his grasp, simply through want of decision to close his hand, and that he might easily marry and get a heap of money into the bargain, so that the unpleasantness of marrying might be greatly alleviated. This argument shook his resolution somewhat. He asked his cousin, Madame de Riémens, to look out for a wife for him. She sought, and found that great gawk Catherine de Puymarin, who is very, *very* rich, but no more figure than a lath. His first words when he saw her were: "She is too slim, and won't look well on horseback." From the moment that he began to entertain the thought of marrying, he settled it as a *sine qua non* that his wife must be a good horsewoman.

Time was flying, and Adrien's friends worried and pressed him. He had begun by saying "No" to them. Then he declined to say either "Yes" or "No." He was in all probability going to say "Yes" when the fateful and dramatic day arrived—November 24th.

On that eventful day, instead of going to ride in the afternoon as I usually do, I had to go in the morning with Monsieur Coates, who kindly considers me one of his most brilliant pupils, and who occasionally does the Bois with me.

At ten o'clock I drove out in a dog-cart with Miss

Morton. We stopped near the Champignon, on the right, at the entrance of the Bois, where Monsieur Coates was waiting for me. The groom had brought Triboulet, who doesn't always behave very well, and on the day in question, as he hadn't been out of his box for forty-eight hours, he was full of mischief, and capered and pranced in fine style. I had had to dress very hurriedly, as it happened, and Virginie had skewered my hair into two balls, and to keep the puffs in place she had stuck in about a dozen hairpins.

Monsieur Coates helped me to mount, but not without some difficulty, for Triboulet was remarkably frisky and disinclined to be mounted. As soon as he felt me on his back he began to plunge, and tore off at full tilt. But I am pretty much at home on horseback—besides, I know how to manage Triboulet, and I punished him soundly. Just, however, as we were in the middle of our explanations I felt something rolling—rolling over my shoulders. It was my hair, which had come down, and was spreading itself in an avalanche, which carried my hat away. So there I was, bareheaded—Triboulet racing as hard as he could, and my hair flying out behind.

At that precise moment, Adrien, Comte de Martelle-Simieuse, rode down the Allée des Poteaux, and got a view of the performance. He reined up at a respectful distance, quite surprised at the unusual sight, and in something less than no time he had given vent to three little exclamations of admiration and wonder:

The first was for the horsewoman: " 'Pon my word, she does ride well."

The second was for my hair: "What a magnificent head of hair."

The third was for my face: "Gad—how pretty."

Triboulet, in the mean time, had got a little calmer. The groom managed to find five of the scattered hair-pins, and I got my hair into a little better condition, and fastened my veil around my head.

Finally, Monsieur Coates and I started, the groom riding behind, and behind him rode the Comte de Martelle-Simieuse, who made a second tour of the Bois in my honor.

I, in my innocence, never dreamt of the conquest I had made. The weather was rather cold and raw, and we went at a good pace. Triboulet, stung by the keen air, made several attempts at insurrection, but he soon found out whom he had to deal with. Monsieur Coates was very much pleased with me.

"This morning," said he, "you ride superbly—like an angel"—which was also the opinion of my second, self-appointed groom, who kept saying to himself:

"How well she rides! How well she rides!"

That was the idea which filled his head during the ride, and he compared me with Catherine de Puymarin.

The ride finished, I went and found Miss Morton, got into the dog-cart, and set off for the Rue de Varennes. Young Martelle-Simieuse trotted behind and acted as my escort home.

He waited until the door was opened and we had entered, then he satisfied himself that I lived in a good house, in a good street, and that from all appearances I was no adventuress.

What he then wanted was the name of the intrepid Amazon. A very simple idea occurred to him. What does the name matter for the moment? He returned home, got the directory—Rue de Varennes, 49 *bis*, Baron and Baronne de Léoty. That is how he discovered the name of her who will perhaps become the faithful partner of his joys and sorrows. Baron de Léoty. He knew papa from the club. But had papa a daughter? The mystery had to be solved.

It was very soon solved, for that evening Adrien dined at the Mercerey's, and during a lull in the conversation he said carelessly to Madame Mercerey: "Do you happen to know a Monsieur de Léoty?"

"Quite well."

"Has he a daughter?"

"Yes."

"How old is she?"

"About twenty."

"Very pretty, isn't she?"

At which, it appears, there was a general and enthusiastic outburst in my honor. He was the only one present who didn't know me, poor fellow. Madame de Mercerey wanted to know the reason for all his inquiries. So he recounted the story of the morning's ride, my horse's obstinacy, my firmness, my hair flying in the wind—in fact, it was quite a lyrical description, which caused general stupefaction, for he had never been heard to sing in that strain before.

Whereupon Madame de Mercerey showed presence of mind which was as rare as it was admirable. *En passant* it must be observed that she loves mama and

hates the Puymarins heartily, although, until about six weeks ago, they were the best of friends. She really has good cause to be offended with them, though.

The Puymarins have given three *soirées* this year—the Orleans princes were at one, and the Grand Duke Vladimir at another, while the third was made up of nobodies. Well, the Duchess invited the Mercereys with the nobodies. Now, considering their birth and fortune, they might reasonably have expected more consideration than that. For that reason they are very angry—and justifiably so.

Now comes Madame de Mercerey's stroke of genius. Taking the ball, as it were, on the rise, without a moment's hesitation, she said, in the presence of her husband, who was stupefied at the assertion, that on the following evening they were going to have a few friends, among whom Madame and Mademoiselle Léoty were invited, and that Monsieur de Martelle-Simieuse would be welcome if he cared to come. There would be some music, and he would have an opportunity of seeing his fair heroine of the Bois. Monsieur de Mercerey was thunderstruck:

"Aren't you mistaken in the date, my dear?" he said. "We were surely going to the Gymnase to-morrow night to see the new piece of Octave Feuillet."

"No, my dear; that is for the day after to-morrow."

"I thought that—I ordered the box myself."

"It is for the day after to-morrow, I tell you."

Upon which Monsieur subsided and got no further explanation of the riddle until dinner was over. Madame de Mercerey's exertions did not stop at that. She

took possession of Monsieur de Martelle-Simieuse, and treated him to a eulogy of me.

"Irene de Léoty is just the girl to suit you—just the wife you want. The meeting this morning was clearly the work of Providence."

He repeated as refrain:

"How well she rides."

Yesterday, after having seen mama, Madame de Mercerey, in spite of her *migraine,* courageously set to work and took the field to get people together—engaged musicians and got programs printed. What admirable activity!

On what insignificant trifles our destiny hangs. If Virginie had fastened my hair up properly, if Triboulet had been quiet, if the Puymarins had not put the Mercereys among the nobodies—Monsieur de Martelle-Simieuse would not have been invited to dine at our house to-morrow, and I should not be asking myself the question:

"Shall I, or shall I not be Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse?"

Poor Puymarins! They have come to Paris for the sole purpose of exhibiting their phenomenon. Poor Catherine de Puymarin! Shall I let her keep her count, or shall I take him myself?

I don't yet know. But I do know that the sixth has not made a bad start, and if I *had* to bet on the result, I would not give odds.

November 20th. Ten o'clock in the morning.

What deliberations there were about the dinner.

Should it be a big affair or a small one? Where should *he* be placed? Opposite me or at my side? Mama at first held out for opposite. She maintained that I produce a much better effect *en face* than *en profil*, especially when I am *décolletée*, and of course I *was décolletée*. I stuck out for being at his side. I didn't feel at all nervous at the idea of having him near me. It was necessary to make him talk, so as to be able to take his measure. I still held to my resolution of not getting married without knowing what I was doing. So, of course, he was put at my side—on my right. So as not to be too hungry, and to have plenty of time for cross-questioning, I had a pretty substantial lunch at five o'clock. That left me free to turn the conversation as I wished—which I did.

We were at table over an hour and a half, and at the end of that time I was convinced that we were made for each other. We first talked about carriages and hunting. It was a splendid start. I discovered immediately that his ideal of a horse is just the same as mine—not too thin, and not too high—light certainly, but not too slim; elegant, but well formed. I think he was somewhat surprised to find that I was *au fait* in such matters. About carriages and gear our ideas are exactly the same.

He was both surprised and charmed. When dinner began he was evidently excited and ill at ease, but as we chatted, and I put him at his ease, the conversation began to go swimmingly. We spoke the same language. We were made to understand each other.

He hunts boars with a pack of eighty hounds—

magnificent animals of the best breed. He described his hunting suit minutely—coat *à la française,* color of dead leaves, facings and pockets of blue velvet. It would be charming to have a costume to harmonize with the dead leaves. I have already an idea for a little hat—a dainty little thing.

One reason which induces me to favor him is that, as a rule, we have to choose our husbands from among men who have nothing to do, and who live lives of the most appalling idleness. That is the reason why *ennui* and fatigue ruins so many happy households.

His time is, however, quite occupied. He hasn't a single minute of free time which he can really call his own. His energy and intellect are employed in pursuits which are at the same time useful and elegant. He is one of the leaders of a very *chic clique,* which has just been organized; member of the committee of a pigeon-shooting society, and of a skaters' league; he is interested in a society for steeplechasing, and is part owner of a stud of race-horses. With so many irons in the fire it is evident that he is fully occupied.

All which I had learned in half an hour. Then I passed on to politics, and catechized him thereon. This is a very, very important question, and I have fully made up my mind to have no misunderstandings on that head. Poor mama has suffered cruelly, and I am resolved not to expose myself to like annoyances.

Mama has been very happy with papa—except from a political standpoint. She was very young when she was married. Her family was an ancient one, and of strict monarchical principles. So was papa. So far, so

good. But toward the end of 1865 papa went over to the Empire. It was not because his opinions had changed—he took the step out of goodness of heart. Poor papa is *so* good—too good in fact. His change in politics was due to his devotion to my Uncle Armand, his brother, who is now general of division. He was only a captain then, and had had no promotion for ages. He was not in favor because papa refused to set foot in the Tuileries in spite of the many advances made to him. So at last papa, who adored Uncle Armand, accepted an invitation and promised to present mama. That was a veritable triumph for the Empire, for there is no bluer blood in France than that of mama's family.

Mama passed the day of the presentation in tears. She was, however, forced to obey, but *en route* there was a frightful scene in the landau. Mama became obstinate, and declared that she would not be presented. She wanted to get out of the carriage into the street, although she was wearing white satin shoes and a crown of roses, and it was snowing heavily at the time. At length she became quieter, and resigned herself to her fate.

A fortnight afterward Uncle Armand received a decoration, and at the end of six months was chief of a squadron. But the affair caused many doors to be shut against papa and mama. That caused him no trouble—not a bit; in fact, he was rather pleased than otherwise. He detests society, and always has his club. But society is mama's life-breath, and she is not a member of the "Jockey," so she suffered cruelly.

Nearly all the doors which were shut have since been opened—that is to say, since the establishment of the Republic, because since then many things have been forgotten. The remainder would be thrown open to me were I once Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. I should be received everywhere with open arms. Since the beginning of the century the political attitude of the Martelle-Simieuses has been irreproachable. It did not even trip during the Empire.

The Martelle-Simieuses can trace their pedigree, fairly and without any trickery, back to the fourteenth century. Adrien's mother—there, I am already calling him Adrien—Adrien's mother was a Précigny-Laroche, and as for his father—Adrien has published a little book about his genealogy. Only a hundred copies were printed and distributed among his friends. Madame de Mercerey has a copy of it, which she lent to mama. I have read it, and reread it, until I know it by heart. It proves incontestably that Adrien is the third in rank among the counts of France—not fourth, but third.

Of course, one must naturally consider nobility of heart and elevation of character in the first place, but one must not forget to attach their real importance to these other things. They are of enormous interest in life, and especially at this particular moment, in the midst of this flood of *soi disant* nobility, in the presence of Spanish dukes and Italian princes, who are easily able, if we can not prove that we are really of noble family, to steal a march on us, and usurp our position in society. I couldn't bear the thought of being

put at table at dinner with money-makers and literary persons.

Another point demands attention, for nothing is too trifling to notice when it is a question of making certain definite arrangements for the comfort and pleasure of after-life. One ought firmly to secure what one wants. Mama has a box at the opera every Monday. It has been understood, for some time past, that when I marry I am to go halves on that box. Mama will have it one Monday, and I the next. That's a very good arrangement, and I am quite satisfied with it.

Now, if I marry Adrien, I shall have a box in the first row, in front, at the Théâtre Français, every Tuesday from December to June. This is how it will be arranged. He has an aunt, a dear old aunt, very rich, without children (so he is her heir), very old, asthmatic, and she has the said box at the Théâtre Français. She is quite willing to hand it over to him, for she never uses it. She has not been in the theatre for over three years. What a dear old aunt she is!

All that information I got out of him between the soup and the cheese. So, when, after dinner, mama rushed to me and said, "Well?" I replied:

"I don't think I could find a better."

"Then it's settled?"

"Two are necessary for a marriage."

"Oh, you may set your mind at rest on that score. You are two. I have been watching you the whole time during dinner. His head is quite turned."

That was my opinion, too. When mama rushed to me, he rushed off to Madame Mercerey, who, of

course, was of the party. He loved me to distraction; adored me, would marry only me—me and nobody else. And he besought Madame Mercerey to go and demand me from mama at once.

She had to try to pacify him, and to show him that one must not act too rashly. Mama, for her part, would have been quite contented to settle the affair at once. She had a dread of the machinations of the Puymarin clique.

I didn't share her fear in the least. I recognized clearly what an effect I had produced, and I felt that I was mistress of the situation. So I reminded mama of her promises, and of my resolution only to come to a decision when I had carefully weighed the pros and cons, and said that I had only seen him twice—each time in evening dress. I was determined to see him twice in the daytime, and in frock coat. I knew how Cousin Mathilde had managed. She saw her husband twice in the daytime—once in the Louvre and once at the Hippodrome. As there was no Hippodrome where I could see Adrien, I would substitute the museum at Cluny. I was determined, however, to have my two interviews in broad daylight.

So Madame Mercerey arranged an accidental meeting at the Louvre for to-day at three o'clock punctually, in front of Murillo's "Virgin."

The same day. Five o'clock.

We have just returned from an hour's stroll in the galleries, where we did not pay much attention to the pictures. I imagine that he is surprisingly ignorant of

pictures. But then I have no thought of marrying an art critic. He has *such* a fine figure, and dresses *so* well. He speaks very little, is very reserved, but very correct; and above all, never makes stupid remarks. Taking him altogether, I am quite contented.

As soon as we were alone in the carriage in the Rue Rivoli, I had to repulse another attack from mama:

"He's simply charming. I should think that you would never insist on Cluny now."

"No. I waive that. Never mind Cluny."

"That's right. Then you've decided?"

"Not yet, mama; not yet. One oughtn't to rush madly into marriage after having got a little information about a man's fortune and situation."

"But what more do you want?"

"To see him on horseback. He's seen me riding, but I haven't seen him."

In short, Madame de Mercerey, whose devotion is indefatigable, is going to advise him to-night to go and ride about at the entrance of the Avenue des Acacias about ten o'clock to-morrow morning. As inducement she will hint delicately that he may possibly meet papa and me. For papa—I must say that papa astonishes me—he is acting the *rôle* of a father who has a marriageable daughter to perfection. He hasn't mounted a horse for four years, but to-morrow he is going to risk a broken neck.

November 20th.

We had a ride round the Bois—all three of us—papa, he, and I. *He* looks very well on horseback. He

rode a splendid bay mare. I will take her for myself, and will pass Triboulet on to him, for I know Triboulet too well, and am tired of him.

On my return I flung my arms round mama's neck—

"Yes, a thousand times," I said.

And with tears in my eyes, I thanked her for having been so indulgent, so good, so patient.

December 4th.

To-day at three o'clock the old aunt who has the box at the theatre on Tuesdays is to come to demand my hand officially, and so before the 10th of January (that will be absolutely necessary because of the grandmother's will) I shall be Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. Adrien will get the one and a half millions and me into the bargain, as extra consolation prize. I think it will be money easily gained. I don't think that he is much to be pitied.

December 11th.

The wedding is fixed for January 6th. It is absurd to get married at such a time, but it couldn't be arranged otherwise. The will! The will! Besides, after all, the date doesn't displease me so very much. We shall have a short—a *very* short—honeymoon—a few days at Nice—ten days at the outside.

After that Paris in full swing, with all the theatres open. The unfortunate Louise de Montbrian got married last spring—at the end of May, and returned to Paris after a six-weeks' honeymoon only to find the city torrid and sinister.

We shall be supremely happy—of that I haven't the slightest doubt. He adores me. And I! Do I love him? Well, I must be candid with myself, and it would not be true if I declared, in the phrases so common in English novels, that I love him madly; that I only really live when he is present; that I tremble at the sound of his footsteps, and start when I hear his voice.

Oh, no! I am not so easily moved. My heart can't be expected to go at that rate. But I already like him very much. Love will come in time, I have no doubt.

Love is such an economizer in a household. I bring a million, and we can reckon on an income of about 230,000 francs. That may at first sight seem a very large income, but it isn't really so. First of all we must deduct about 80,000 francs for the keeping up of Simieuse, our château in Vendée, and for hunting. That will leave only 150,000 francs for living expenses, which amount will be quite sufficient if we love each other and pull together *en bon comarade*.

But if, on the contrary, we begin after a short time —and this is the history of many households—to pull in opposite directions, we shall only have 75,000 francs each, and that will mean pinching—supposing that theatres—leaving the opera and the Théâtre Français out of the reckoning—cost 2,000 or 3,000 francs a year if we go together, it would at once be double that sum if we went separately. And so with everything else—the expenditure doubled.

Take, for instance, Caroline and her husband. They have only 100,000 francs per annum, but they live well,

and without economizing. Why? Because they love each other. They have quite a small house, and naturally don't require a host of servants. They receive little, and rarely go out. The more they are with each other, the more they see of each other, the more they are satisfied. Caroline is quite content, too, with 12,000 francs for her toilet.

Take Adèle as an example of the contrary. Poor girl, she married very much against her own will and judgment. Her mother was dazzled by the title. Certainly a title is something—in fact, it is a great deal—but it is not exactly everything. Well, her marriage with Gontran turned out badly. Things went wrong from the first week. Consequently they find themselves pinched in spite of their great income of 250,000 francs. She spends a fortune on clothes, on stupid whims. It costs her much more to satisfy the whole world than it would to please one individual. The Duke, in consequence, has taken to play, and has already squandered half of his fortune.

Caroline said to me recently:

"As soon as you are married try to love your husband. In our set that means a saving of at least 100,000 per annum, and even if people can't love each other for love's sake, they ought to for convenience."

"Oh, yes! I'll love him. I'll love him. Besides, it's only the 11th of December. Between now and the 6th of January I have still twenty-six days before me."

THE ACCURSED HOUSE

BY ÉMILE GABORIAU



Émile Gaboriau, best known for his remarkable detective stories, was born at Sanson in 1853, and died at Paris in 1873. He was for a time private secretary of Paul Féval, the novelist, and published a great variety of work. In 1866 appeared in the paper called "Le Pays" his first great detective story, "L'Affaire Lerouge," which the author dramatized in collaboration with Hostein in 1872. Like all of the great series, "L'Affaire Lerouge," "Monsieur Lecoq," "Les Esclaves de Paris," etc., are written in an easy flowing style, and are full of exciting moments.

It is interesting to trace the ancestry of the modern detective story. The first seeds are said to be found in Voltaire's "Zadig"; they germinate in Poe's tales, take form in Gaboriau, and are in full bloom in Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes."

THE ACCURSED HOUSE

BY ÉMILE GABORIAU

THE Vicomte de B——, an amiable and charming young man, was peacefully enjoying an income of 30,000 livres yearly, when, unfortunately for him, his uncle, a miser of the worst species, died, leaving him all his wealth, amounting to nearly two millions.

In running through the documents of succession, the Vicomte de B—— learned that he was the proprietor of a house in the Rue de la Victoire. He learned, also, that the unfurnished building, bought in 1849 for 300,000 francs, now brought in, clear of taxes, rentals amounting to 82,000 francs a year.

"Too much, too much, entirely," thought the generous vicomte, "my uncle was too hard; to rent at this price is usury, one can not deny it. When one bears a great name like mine, one should not lend himself to such plundering. I will begin to-morrow to lower my rents, and my tenants will bless me."

With this excellent purpose in view, the Vicomte de B—— sent immediately for the *concièrge* of the building, who presented himself as promptly, with back bent like a bow.

"Bernard, my friend," said the vicomte, "go at

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once from me and notify all your tenants that I lower their rents by one-third."

That unheard-of word "lower" fell like a brick on Bernard's head. But he quickly recovered himself; he had heard badly; he had not understood.

"Low—er the rents!" stammered he. "Monsieur le Vicomte deigns to jest. Lower! Monsieur, of course means to raise the rents."

"I was never more serious in my life, my friend," the vicomte returned; "I said, and I repeat it, lower the rents."

This time the *concièrge* was surprised to the point of bewilderment—so thrown off his balance that he forgot himself and lost all restraint.

"Monsieur has not reflected," persisted he. "Monsieur will regret this evening. Lower the tenants' rents! Never was such a thing known, monsieur! If the lodgers should learn of it, what would they think of monsieur? What would people say in the neighborhood? Truly—"

"Monsieur Bernard, my friend," dryly interrupted the vicomte, "I prefer, when I give an order, to be obeyed without reply. You hear me—go!"

Staggering like a drunken man, Monsieur Bernard went out from the house of his proprietor.

All his ideas were upset, overthrown, confounded. Was he, or was he not, the plaything of a dream, a ridiculous nightmare? Was he himself Pierre Bernard, or Bernard somebody else?

"Lower his rents! lower his rents!" repeated he. "It is not to be believed! If indeed the lodgers had

complained! But they have not complained; on the contrary, all are good payers. Ah! if his uncle could only know this, he would rise from the tomb! His nephew has gone mad, 'tis certain! Lower the rents! They should have up this young man before a family council; he will finish badly! Who knows—after this—what he will do next? He lunched too well, perhaps, this morning."

And the worthy Bernard was so pale with emotion when he reentered his lodge, so pale and spent, that on seeing him enter, his wife and daughter Amanda exclaimed as with one voice:

"Goodness! what is it? What has happened to you now?"

"Nothing," responded he, with altered voice, "absolutely nothing."

"You are deceiving me," insisted Madame Bernard, "you are concealing something from me; do not spare me; speak, I am strong—what did the new proprietor tell you? Does he think of turning us off?"

"If it were only that! But just think, he told me with his own lips, he told me to—ah! you will never believe me—"

"Oh, yes; only do go on."

"You will have it, then!— Well, then, he told me, he ordered me to notify all the tenants that—*he lowered their rents one-third!* Did you hear what I said? —*lowered* the rents of the tenants—"

But neither Madame nor Mademoiselle Bernard heard him out—they were twisting and doubling with convulsive laughter.

"Lower!" repeated they; "ah! what a good joke, what a droll man! Lower the tenants' rents."

But Bernard, losing his temper and insisting that he must be taken seriously in his own lodge, his wife lost her temper too, and a quarrel followed! Madame Bernard declaring that Monsieur Bernard had, beyond a doubt, taken his fantastic order from the bottom of a litre of wine in the restaurant at the corner.

But for Mademoiselle Amanda the couple would undoubtedly have come to blows, and finally Madame Bernard, who did not wish to be thought demented, threw a shawl over her head and ran to the proprietor's house. Bernard had spoken truly; with her own two ears, ornamented with big, gilded hoops, she heard the incredible word. Only, as she was a wise and prudent woman, she demanded "a bit of writing" to put, as she said, "her responsibility under cover."

She, too, returned thunderstruck, and all the evening in the lodge, father, mother, and daughter deliberated.

Should they obey? or should they warn some relative of this mad young man, whose common sense would oppose itself to such insanity?

They decided to obey.

Next morning, Bernard, buttoning himself into his best frock coat, made the rounds of the three-and-twenty lodges to announce his great news.

Ten minutes afterward the house in the Rue de la Victoire was in a state of commotion impossible to describe. People who, for forty years had lived on

the same floor, and never honored each other with so much as a tip of the hat, now clustered together and chatted eagerly.

"Do you know, monsieur?"

"It is very extraordinary."

"Simply unheard of!"

"The proprietor's lowered my rent!"

"One-third, is it not? Mine also."

"Astounding! It *must* be a mistake!"

And despite the affirmations of the Bernard family, despite even the "bit of writing" "under cover," there were found among the tenants doubting Thomases, who doubted still in the face of everything.

Three of them actually wrote to the proprietor to tell him what had passed, and to charitably warn him that his *concièrge* had wholly lost his mind. The proprietor responded to these skeptics, confirming what Bernard had said. Doubt, thereafter, was out of the question.

Then began reflections and commentaries.

"*Why* had the proprietor lowered his rents?"

"Yes, *why?*"

"What motives," said they all, "actuate this strange man? For certainly he must have grave reasons for a step like this! An intelligent man, a man of good sense, would never deprive himself of good fat revenues, well secured, for the simple pleasure of depriving himself. One would not conduct himself thus without being forced, constrained by powerful or terrible circumstances."

And each said to himself:

"There is something under all this!"

"But what?"

And from the first floor to the sixth they sought and conjectured and delved in their brains. Every lodger had the preoccupied air of a man that strives with all his wits to solve an impossible cipher, and everywhere there began to be a vague disquiet, as it happens when one finds himself in the presence of a sinister mystery.

Some one went so far as to hazard:

"This man must have committed a great and still hidden crime; remorse pushes him to philanthropy."

"It was not a pleasant idea, either, the thought of living thus side by side with a rascal; no, by no means; he might be repentant, and all that, but suppose he yielded to temptation once more!"

"The house, perhaps, was badly built?" questioned another, anxiously.

"Hum-m, so-so! no one could tell; but all knew one thing—it was very, very old!"

"True! and it had been necessary to prop it when they dug the drain last year in the month of March."

"Maybe it was the roof, then, and the house is top-heavy?" suggested a tenant on the fifth floor.

"Or perhaps," said a lodger in the garret, "there is a press for coining counterfeit money in the cellar; I have often heard at night a sound like the dull, muffled thud of a coin-stamper."

The opinion of another was that Russian, maybe Prussian, spies had gained a lodgment in the house, while the gentleman of the first story was inclined to

believe that the proprietor purposed to set fire to his house and furniture with the sole object of drawing great sums from the insurance companies.

Then began to happen, as they all declared, extraordinary and even frightful things. On the sixth and mansard floors it appeared that strange and absolutely inexplicable noises were heard. Then the nurse of the old lady on the fourth story, going one night to steal wine from the cellar, encountered the ghost of the defunct proprietor—he even held in his hand a receipt for rent—by which she knew him!

And the refrain from loft to cellar was:

"There *is* something under all this!"

From disquietude it had come to fright; from fright it quickly passed to terror. So that the gentleman of the first floor, who had valuables in his rooms, made up his mind to go, and sent in notice by his clerk.

Bernard went to inform the proprietor, who responded:

"All right, let the fool go!"

But next day the chiropodist of the second floor, though he had naught to fear for his valuables, imitated the gentleman beneath him. Then the bachelors and the little households of the fifth story quickly followed this example.

From that moment it was a general rout. By the end of the week, everybody had given notice. Every one awaited some frightful catastrophe. They slept no more. They organized patrols. The terrified domestics swore that they too would quit the accursed house and remained temporarily only on tripled wages.

Bernard was no more than the ghost of himself; the fever of fear had worn him to a shadow.

"No," repeated his wife mournfully at each fresh notification, "no, it is *not* natural."

Meanwhile three-and-twenty "For Rent" placards swung against the façade of the house, drawing an occasional applicant for lodgings.

Bernard—never grumbling now—climbed the staircase and ushered the visitor from apartment to apartment.

"You can have your choice," said he to the people that presented themselves, "the house is entirely vacant; all the tenants have given notice as one man. They do not know why, exactly, but things have happened, oh! yes, *things!* a mystery such as was never before known—*the proprietor has lowered his rents!*"

And the would-be lodgers fled away affrighted.

The term ended, three-and-twenty vans carried away the furniture of the three-and-twenty tenants. Everybody left. From top to bottom, from foundations to garret, the house lay empty of lodgers.

The rats themselves, finding nothing to live on, abandoned it also.

Only the *concièrge* remained, gray green with fear in his lodge. Frightful visions haunted his sleep. He seemed to hear lugubrious howlings and sinister murmurs at night that made his teeth chatter with terror and his hair erect itself under his cotton nightcap. Madame Bernard no more closed an eye than he. And Amanda in her frenzy renounced all thought of the operatic stage and married—for nothing in the world

but to quit the paternal lodge—a young barber and hair-dresser whom she had never before been able to abide.

At last, one morning, after a more frightful nightmare than usual, Bernard, too, took a great resolution. He went to the proprietor, gave up his keys, and scampered away.

. . . . . .

And now on the Rue de la Victoria stands the abandoned house, "The Accursed House," whose history I have told you. Dust thickens upon the closed slats, grass grows in the court. No tenant ever presents himself now; and in the quarter, where stands this Accursed House, so funereal is its reputation that even the neighboring houses on either side of it have also depreciated in value.

Lower one's rents!! Who would think of such a thing!!!

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

BY ÉMILE ZOLA



"Jacques Damour" is the greatest of Zola's short stories, but its length precludes its use here.

"Zola," says Edmund Gosse, "has rarely displayed the quality of humor, but it is present in the story called 'The Fête at Coqueville.'"

This scientific collector of "human documents" is probably the most widely read of modern French authors. He was born at Paris in 1840, the son of an Italian engineer. In 1871 he began that long series for which he has been so much censured, the twenty volumes of "Rougon-Macquart," the natural and social history of a family under the Second Empire. Zola died by asphyxiation in 1902.

Though Zola has a predilection for the ugly side of life, he offends only against taste and not against morals. It was a splendid act of heroism, that manifesto of his called "J'Accuse," in which he defended Dreyfus in 1898, and for which he was imprisoned and fined.

THE FÊTE AT COQUEVILLE

BY ÉMILE ZOLA

COQUEVILLE is a little village planted in a cleft in the rocks, two leagues from Grandport. A fine sandy beach stretches in front of the huts lodged half-way up in the side of the cliff like shells left there by the tide. As one climbs to the heights of Grandport, on the left the yellow sheet of sand can be very clearly seen to the west like a river of gold dust streaming from the gaping cleft in the rock; and with good eyes one can even distinguish the houses, whose tones of rust spot the rock and whose chimneys send up their bluish trails to the very crest of the great slope, streaking the sky. It is a deserted hole. Coqueville has never been able to attain to the figure of two hundred inhabitants. The gorge which opens into the sea, and on the threshold of which the village is planted, burrows into the earth by turns so abrupt and by descents so steep that it is almost impossible to pass there with wagons. It cuts off all communication and isolates the country so that one seems to be a hundred leagues from the neighboring hamlets. Moreover, the inhabitants have communication with Grandport only by water. Nearly all of them fishermen, living by the ocean, they carry their fish there every day in their barks. A great commission house,

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the firm of Dufeu, buys their fish on contract. The father Dufeu has been dead some years, but the widow Dufeu has continued the business; she has simply engaged a clerk, M. Mouchel, a big blond devil, charged with beating up the coast and dealing with the fishermen. This M. Mouchel is the sole link between Coqueville and the civilized world.

Coqueville merits a historian. It seems certain that the village, in the night of time, was founded by the Mahés; a family which happened to establish itself there and which grew vigorous at the foot of the cliff. These Mahés continued to prosper at first, marrying continually among themselves, for during centuries one finds none but Mahés there. Then under Louis XIII appeared one Floche. No one knew too much of where he came from. He married a Mahé, and from that time a phenomenon was brought forth; the Floches in their turn prospered and multiplied exceedingly, so that they ended little by little in absorbing the Mahés whose numbers diminished until their fortune passed entirely into the hands of the newcomers. Without doubt, the Floches brought new blood, more vigorous physical organs, a temperament which adapted itself better to that hard condition of high wind and of high sea. At any rate, they are to-day masters of Coqueville.

It can easily be understood that this displacement of numbers and of riches was not accomplished without terrible disturbances. The Mahés and the Floches detest each other. Between them is a hatred of centuries. The Mahés in spite of their decline retain the pride of ancient conquerors. After all they are the

founders, the ancestors. They speak with contempt of the first Floche, a beggar, a vagabond picked up by them from feelings of pity, and to have given away one of their daughters to whom was their eternal regret. This Floche, to hear them speak, had engendered nothing but a descent of libertines and thieves, who pass their nights in raising children and their days in coveting legacies. And there is not an insult they do not heap upon the powerful tribe of Floche, seized with that bitter rage of nobles, decimated, ruined, who see the spawn of the bourgeoisie master of their rents and of their châteaux. The Floches, on their side, naturally have the insolence of those who triumph. They are in full possession, a thing to make them insolent. Full of contempt for the ancient race of the Mahés, they threaten to drive them from the village if they do not bow their heads. To them they are starvelings, who instead of draping themselves in their rags would do much better to mend them.

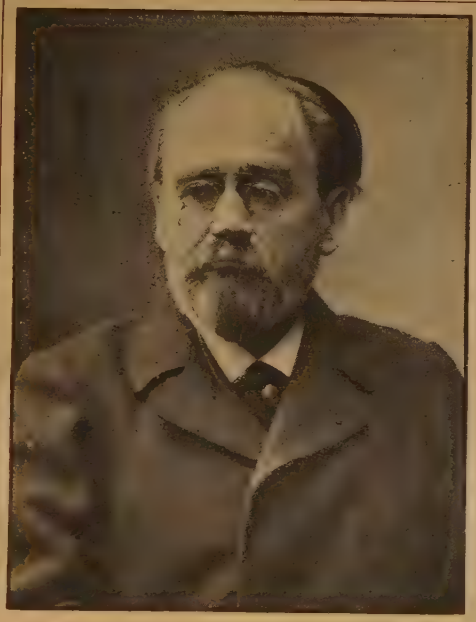
So Coqueville finds itself a prey to two fierce factions—something like one hundred and thirty inhabitants bent upon devouring the other fifty for the simple reason that they are the stronger.

The struggle between two great empires has no other history.

Among the quarrels which have lately upset Coqueville, they cite the famous enmity of the brothers, Fouasse and Tupain, and the ringing battles of the Rouget ménage. You must know that every inhabitant in former days received a surname, which has become to-day the regular name of the family; for it was

difficult to distinguish one's self among the cross-breedings of the Mahés and the Floches. Rouget assuredly had an ancestor of fiery blood. As for Fouasse and Tupain, they were called thus without knowing why, many surnames having lost all rational meaning in course of time. Well, old Françoise, a wanton of eighty years who lived forever, had had Fouasse by a Mahé, then becoming a widow, she remarried with a Floche and brought forth Tupain. Hence the hatred of the two brothers, made specially lively by the question of inheritance. At the Rouget's they beat each other to a jelly because Rouget accused his wife, Marie, of being unfaithful to him for a Floche, the tall Brisemotte, a strong, dark man, on whom he had already twice thrown himself with a knife, yelling that he would rip open his belly. Rouget, a small, nervous man, was a great spitfire.

But that which interested Coqueville most deeply was neither the tantrums of Rouget nor the differences between Tupain and Fouasse. A great rumor circulated: Delphin, a Mahé, a rascal of twenty years, dared to love the beautiful Margot, the daughter of La Queue, the richest of the Floches and chief man of the country. This La Queue was, in truth, a considerable personage. They called him La Queue because his father in the days of Louis Philippe, had been the last to tie up his hair, with the obstinacy of old age that clings to the fashions of its youth. Well, then, La Queue owned one of the two large fishing smacks of Coqueville, the "Zephir," by far the best, still quite new and seaworthy. The other big boat,



Emile Zola

Emile Zola

the "Baleine," a rotten old patache,[1] belonged to Rouget, whose sailors were Delphin and Fouasse, while La Queue took with him Tupain and Brisemotte. These last had grown weary of laughing contemptuously at the "Baleine"; a sabot, they said, which would disappear some fine day under the billows like a handful of mud. So when La Queue learned that that ragamuffin of a Delphin, the froth of the "Baleine," allowed himself to go prowling around his daughter, he delivered two sound whacks at Margot, a trifle merely to warn her that she should never be the wife of a Mahé. As a result, Margot, furious, declared that she would pass that pair of slaps on to Delphin if he ever ventured to rub against her skirts. It was vexing to be boxed on the ears for a boy whom she had never looked in the face!

Margot, at sixteen years strong as a man and handsome as a lady, had the reputation of being a scornful person, very hard on lovers. And from that, added to the trifle of the two slaps, of the presumptuousness of Delphin, and of the wrath of Margot, one ought easily to comprehend the endless gossip of Coqueville.

Notwithstanding, certain persons said that Margot, at bottom, was not so very furious at sight of Delphin circling around her. This Delphin was a little blonde, with skin bronzed by the sea-glare, and with a mane of curly hair that fell over his eyes and in his neck. And very powerful despite his slight figure; quite capable of thrashing any one three times his size. They said that at times he ran away and passed the

[1] Naval term signifying a rickety old concern.

night in Grandport. That gave him the reputation of a werwolf with the girls, who accused him, among themselves, of "making a life of it"—a vague expression in which they included all sorts of unknown pleasures. Margot, when she spoke of Delphin, betrayed too much feeling. He, smiling with an artful air, looked at her with eyes half shut and glittering, without troubling himself the least in the world over her scorn or her transports of passion. He passed before her door, he glided along by the bushes watching for her hours at a time, full of the patience and the cunning of a cat lying in wait for a tomtit; and when suddenly she discovered him behind her skirts, so close to her at times that she guessed it by the warmth of his breath, he did not fly, he took on an air gentle and melancholy which left her abashed, stifled, not regaining her wrath until he was some distance away. Surely, if her father saw her he would smite her again. But she boasted in vain that Delphin would some day get that pair of slaps she had promised him; she never seized the moment to apply them when he was there; which made people say that she ought not to talk so much, since in the end she kept the slaps herself.

No one, however, supposed she could ever be Delphin's wife. In her case they saw the weakness of a coquette. As for a marriage between the most beggardly of the Mahés, a fellow who had not six shirts to set up housekeeping with, and the daughter of the mayor, the richest heiress of the Floches, it would seem simply monstrous. Evil tongues insinuated that she could perfectly go with him all the same, but that she

would certainly not marry him. A rich girl takes her pleasure as it suits her, only if she has a head, she does not commit a folly. Finally all Coqueville interested itself in the matter, curious to know how things would turn out. Would Delphin get his two slaps? or else Margot, would she let herself be kissed on both cheeks in some hole in the cliff? They must see! There were some for the slaps and there were some for the kisses. Coqueville was in revolution.

In the village two people only, the curé and the *garde champêtre,*[2] belonged neither to the Mahés nor to the Floches. The *garde champêtre,* a tall, dried-up fellow, whose name no one knew, but who was called the Emperor, no doubt because he had served under Charles X, as a matter of fact exercised no burdensome supervision over the commune which was all bare rocks and waste lands. A sub-perfect who patronized him had created for him the sinecure where he devoured in peace his very small living.

As for the Abbé Radiguet, he was one of those simple-minded priests whom the bishop, in his desire to be rid of him, buries in some out of the way hole. He lived the life of an honest man, once more turned peasant, hoeing his little garden redeemed from the rock, smoking his pipe and watching his salads grow. His sole fault was a gluttony which he knew not how to refine, reduced to adoring mackerel and to drinking, at times, more cider than he could contain. In other respects, the father of his parishioners, who came at long intervals to hear a mass to please him.

[2] Watchman.

But the curé and the *garde champêtre* were obliged to take sides after having succeeded for a long time in remaining neutral. Now, the Emperor held for the Mahés, while the Abbè Radiguet supported the Floches. Hence complications. As the Emperor, from morning to night, lived like a bourgeois [citizen], and as he wearied of counting the boats which put out from Grandport, he took it upon himself to act as village police. Having become the partizan of the Mahés, through native instinct for the preservation of society, he sided with Fouasse against Tupain; he tried to catch the wife of Rouget in *flagrante delicto* with Brisemotte, and above all he closed his eyes when he saw Delphin slipping into Margot's courtyard. The worst of it was that these tactics brought about heated quarrels between the Emperor and his natural superior, the mayor La Queue. Respectful of discipline, the former heard the reproaches of the latter, then recommenced to act as his head dictated; which disorganized the public authority of Coqueville. One could not pass before the shed ornamented with the name of the town hall without being deafened by the noise of some dispute. On the other hand, the Abbé Radiguet rallied to the triumphant Floches, who loaded him with superb mackerel, secretly encouraged the resistance of Rouget's wife and threatened Margot with the flames of hell if she should ever allow Delphin to touch her with his finger. It was, to sum up, complete anarchy; the army in revolt against the civil power, religion making itself complaisant toward the pleasures of the bourgoisie; a whole people, a hundred

and eighty inhabitants, devouring each other in a hole, in face of the vast sea, and of the infinite sky.

Alone, in the midst of topsy-turvy Coqueville, Delphin preserved the laughter of a love-sick boy, who scorned the rest, provided Margot was for him. He followed her zigzags as one follows hares. Very wise, despite his simple look, he wanted the curé to marry them, so that his bliss might last forever.

One evening, in a byway where he was watching for her, Margot at last raised her hand. But she stopped, all red; for without waiting for the slap, he had seized the hand that threatened him and kissed it furiously. As she trembled, he said to her in a low voice: "I love you. Won't you have me?"

"Never!" she cried, in rebellion.

He shrugged his shoulders, then with an air, calm and tender, "Pray do not say that—we shall be very comfortable together, we two. You will see how nice it is."

II

That Sunday the weather was appalling, one of those sudden calamities of September that unchain such fearful tempests on the rocky coast of Grandport. At nightfall Coqueville sighted a ship in distress driven by the wind. But the shadows deepened, they could not dream of rendering help. Since the evening before, the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" had been moored in the little natural harbor situated at the left of the beach, between two walls of granite. Neither La Queue nor Rouget had dared to go out.

the worst of it was that M. Mouchel, representing the Widow Dufeu, had taken the trouble to come in person that Saturday to promise them a reward if they would make a serious effort; fish was scarce, they were complaining at the markets. So, Sunday evening, going to bed under squalls of rain, Coqueville growled in a bad humor. It was the everlasting story: orders kept coming in while the sea guarded its fish. And all the village talked of the ship which they had seen passing in the hurricane, and which must assuredly by that time be sleeping at the bottom of the water. The next day, Monday, the sky was dark as ever. The sea, still high, raged without being able to calm itself, although the wind was blowing less strong. It fell completely, but the waves kept up their furious motion. In spite of everything, the two boats went out in the afternoon. Toward four o'clock, the "Zéphir" came in again, having caught nothing. While the sailors, Tupain and Brisemotte, anchored in the little harbor, La Queue, exasperated, on the shore, shook his fist at the ocean. And M. Mouchel was waiting! Margot was there, with the half of Coqueville, watching the last surgings of the tempest, sharing her father's rancor against the sea and the sky.

"But where is the 'Baleine'?" demanded some one.

"Out there beyond the point," said La Queue. "If that carcass comes back whole to-day, it will be by a chance."

He was full of contempt. Then he informed them that it was good for the Mahés to risk their skins in

that way; when one is not worth a sou, one may perish. As for him, he preferred to break his word to M. Mouchel.

In the mean time, Margot was examining the point of rocks behind which the "Baleine" was hidden.

"Father," she asked at last, "have they caught something?"

"They?" he cried. "Nothing at all."

He calmed himself and added more gently, seeing the Emperor, who was sneering at him:

"I do not know whether they have caught anything, but as they never do catch anything—"

"Perhaps, to-day, all the same, they have taken something," said the Emperor ill-naturedly. "Such things have been seen." La Queue was about to reply angrily. But the Abbé Radiguet, who came up, calmed him. From the porch of the church the abbé had happened to observe the "Baleine"; and the bark seemed to be giving chase to some big fish. This news greatly interested Coqueville. In the groups reunited on the shore there were Mahés and Floches, the former praying that the boat might come in with a miraculous catch, the others making vows that it might come in empty.

Margot, holding herself very straight, did not take her eyes from the sea. "There they are!" said she simply.

And in fact a black dot showed itself beyond the point. All looked at it. One would have said a cork dancing on the water. The Emperor did not see even the black dot. One must be of Coqueville to

recognize at that distance the "Baleine" and those who manned her.

"See!" said Margot, who had the best eyes of the coast, "it is Fouasse and Rouget who are rowing—The little one is standing up in the bow."

She called Delphin "the little one" so as not to mention his name. And from then on they followed the course of the bark, trying to account for her strange movements. As the curé said, she appeared to be giving chase to some great fish that might be fleeing before her. That seemed extraordinary. The Emperor pretended that their net was without doubt being carried away. But La Queue cried that they were do-nothings, and that they were just amusing themselves. Quite certain they were not fishing for seals! All the Floches made merry over that joke; while the Mahés, vexed, declared that Rouget was a fine fellow all the same, and that he was risking his skin while others at the least puff of wind preferred *terra firma.* The Abbé Radiguet was forced to interpose again for there were slaps in the air.

"What ails them?" said Margot abruptly. "They are off again!" They ceased menacing one another, and every eye searched the horizon. The "Baleine" was once more hidden behind the point. This time La Queue himself became uneasy. He could not account for such maneuvres. The fear that Rouget was really in a fair way to catch some fish threw him off his mental balance. No one left the beach, although there was nothing strange to be seen. They stayed there nearly two hours, they watched incessantly for

the bark, which appeared from time to time, then disappeared. It finished by not showing itself at all any more. La Queue, enraged, breathing in his heart the abominable wish, declared that she must have sunk; and, as just at that moment Rouget's wife appeared with Brisemotte, he looked at them both, sneering, while he patted Tupain on the shoulder to console him already for the death of his brother, Fouasse. But he stopped laughing when he caught sight of his daughter Margot, silent and looming, her eyes on the distance; it was quite possibly for Delphin.

"What are you up to over there?" he scolded. "Be off home with you! Mind, Margot!"

She did not stir. Then all at once: "Ah! there they are!"

He gave a cry of surprise. Margot, with her good eyes, swore that she no longer saw a soul in the bark; neither Rouget, nor Fouasse, nor any one! The "Baleine," as if abandoned, ran before the wind, tacking about every minute, rocking herself with a lazy air.

A west wind had fortunately risen and was driving her toward the land, but with strange caprices which tossed her to right and to left. Then all Coqueville ran down to the shore. One half shouted to the other half, there remained not a girl in the houses to look after the soup. It was a catastrophe; something inexplicable, the strangeness of which completely turned their heads. Marie, the wife of Rouget, after a moment's reflection, thought it her duty to burst into tears. Tupain succeeded in merely carrying an air of

affliction. All the Mahés were in great distress, while the Floches tried to appear conventional. Margot collapsed as if she had her legs broken.

"What are you up to again!" cried La Queue, who stumbled upon her.

"I am tired," she answered simply.

And she turned her face toward the sea, her cheeks between her hands, shading her eyes with the ends of her fingers, gazing fixedly at the bark rocking itself idly on the waves with the air of a good fellow who has drunk too much.

In the mean while suppositions were rife. Perhaps the three men had fallen into the water? Only, all three at a time, that seemed absurd. La Queue would have liked well to persuade them that the "Baleine" had gone to pieces like a rotten egg; but the boat still held the sea; they shrugged their shoulders. Then, as if the three men had actually perished, he remembered that he was Mayor and spoke of formalities.

"Leave off!" cried the Emperor, "Does one die in such a silly way?" "If they had fallen overboard, little Delphin would have been here by this!"

All Coqueville had to agree, Delphin swam like a herring. But where then could the three men be? They shouted: "I tell you, yes!"—"I tell you, no!"—"Too stupid!"— "Stupid yourself!" And matters came to the point of exchanging blows. The Abbé Radiguet was obliged to make an appeal for reconciliation, while the Emperor hustled the crowd about to establish order. Meanwhile, the bark, without haste,

continued to dance before the world. It waltzed, seeming to mock at the people; the sea carried her in, making her salute the land in long rhythmic reverences. Surely it was a bark in a crazy fit. Margot, her cheeks between her hands, kept always gazing. A yawl had just put out of the harbor to go to meet the "Baleine." It was Brisemotte, who had exhibited that impatience, as if he had been delayed in giving certainty to Rouget's wife. From that moment all Coqueville interested itself in the yawl. The voices rose higher: "Well, does he see anything?" The "Baleine" advanced with her mysterious and mocking air. At last they saw him draw himself up and look into the bark that he had succeeded in taking in tow. All held their breath. But, abruptly, he burst out laughing. That was a surprise; what had he to be amused at? "What is it? What have you got there?" they shouted to him furiously.

He, without replying, laughed still louder. He made gestures as if to say that they would see. Then having fastened the "Baleine" to the yawl, he towed her back. And an unlooked-for spectacle stunned Coqueville. In the bottom of the bark, the three men—Rouget, Delphin, Fouasse—were beatifically stretched out on their backs, snoring, with fists clenched, dead drunk. In their midst was found a little cask stove in, some full cask they had come across at sea and which they had appreciated. Without doubt, it was very good, for they had drunk it all save a liter's worth which had leaked into the bark and which was mixed with the sea water.

"Ah! the pig!" cried the wife of Rouget, brutally, ceasing to whimper.

"Well, it's characteristic—their catch!" said La Queue, who affected great disgust.

"Forsooth!" replied the Emperor, "they catch what they can! They have at least caught a cask, while others have not caught anything at all."

The Mayor shut up, greatly vexed. Coqueville brayed. They understood now. When barks are intoxicated, they dance as men do; and that one, in truth, had her belly full of liquor. Ah, the slut! What a minx! She festooned over the ocean with the air of a sot who could no longer recognize his home. And Coqueville laughed, and fumed, the Mahés found it funny, while the Floches found it disgusting. They surrounded the "Baleine," they craned their necks, they strained their eyes to see sleeping there the three jolly dogs who were exposing the secret springs of their jubilation, oblivious of the crowd hanging over them. The abuse and the laughter troubled them but little. Rouget did not hear his wife accuse him of drinking up all they had; Fouasse did not feel the stealthy kicks with which his brother Tupain rammed his sides. As for Delphin, he was pretty, after he had drunk, with his blond hair, his rosy face drowned in bliss. Margot had gotten up, and silently, for the present, she contemplated the little fellow with a hard expression.

"Must put them to bed!" cried a voice.

But just then Delphin opened his eyes. He rolled looks of rapture over the people. They questioned him

on all sides with an eagerness that dazed him somewhat, the more easily since he was still as drunk as a thrush.

"Well! What?" he stuttered; "it was a little cask—There is no fish. Therefore, we have caught a little cask."

He did not get beyond that. To every sentence he added simply: "It was very good!"

"But what was it in the cask?" they asked him hotly.

"Ah! I don't know—it was very good."

By this time Coqueville was burning to know. Every one lowered their noses to the boat, sniffing vigorously. With one opinion, it smelt of liquor; only no one could guess what liquor. The Emperor, who flattered himself that he had drunk of everything that a man can drink, said that he would see. He solemnly took in the palm of his hand a little of the liquor that was swimming in the bottom of the bark. The crowd became all at once silent. They waited. But the Emperor, after sucking up a mouthful, shook his head as if still badly informed. He sucked twice, more and more embarrassed, with an air of uneasiness and surprise. And he was bound to confess:

"I do not know— It's strange— If there was no salt water in it, I would know, no doubt— My word of honor, it is very strange!"

They looked at him. They stood struck with awe before that which the Emperor himself did not venture to pronounce. Coqueville contemplated with respect the little empty cask.

"It was very good!" once more said Delphin, who seemed to be making game of the people. Then, indicating the sea with a comprehensive sweep, he added: "If you want some, there is more there—I saw them —little casks—little casks—little casks—"

And he rocked himself with the refrain which he kept singing, gazing tenderly at Margot. He had just caught sight of her. Furious, she made a motion as if to slap him; but he did not even close his eyes; he awaited the slap with an air of tenderness.

The Abbé Radiguet, puzzled by that unknown tipple, he, too, dipped his finger in the bark and sucked it. Like the Emperor, he shook his head: no, he was not familiar with that, it was very extraordinary. They agreed on but one point: the cask must have been wreckage from the ship in distress, signaled Sunday evening. The English ships often carried to Grandport such cargoes of liquor and fine wines.

Little by little the day faded and the people were withdrawn into shadow. But La Queue remained absorbed, tormented by an idea which he no longer expressed. He stopped, he listened a last time to Delphin, whom they were carrying along, and who was repeating in his sing-song voice: "Little casks—little casks—little casks—if you want some, there are more!"

III

That night the weather changed completely. When Coqueville awoke the following day an unclouded sun was shining; the sea spread out without a wrinkle, like

a great piece of green satin. And it was warm, one of those pale glows of autumn.

First of the village, La Queue had risen, still clouded from the dreams of the night. He kept looking for a long time toward the sea, to the right, to the left. At last, with a sour look, he said that he must in any event satisfy M. Mouchel. And he went away at once with Tupain and Brisemotte, threatening Margot to touch up her sides if she did not walk straight. As the "Zéphir" left the harbor, and as he saw the "Baleine" swinging heavily at her anchor, he cheered up a little, saying: "To-day, I guess, not a bit of it! Blow out the candle, Jeanetton! those gentlemen have gone to bed!"

And as soon as the "Zéphir" had reached the open sea, La Queue cast his nets. After that he went to visit his "jambins." The jambins are a kind of elongated eel-pot in which they catch more, especially lobsters and red gurnet. But in spite of the calm sea, he did well to visit his jambins one by one. All were empty; at the bottom of the last one, as if in mockery, he found a little mackerel, which he threw back angrily into the sea. It was fate; there were weeks like that when the fish flouted Coqueville, and always at a time when M. Mouchel had expressed a particular desire for them. When La Queue drew in his nets, an hour later, he found nothing but a bunch of seaweed. Straightway he swore, his fists clenched, raging so much the more for the vast serenity of the ocean, lazy and sleeping like a sheet of burnished silver under the blue sky. The "Zéphir," without a waver, glided

along in gentle ease. La Queue decided to go in again, after having cast his nets once more. In the afternoon he came to see them, and he menaced God and the saints, cursing in abominable words.

In the mean while, Rouget, Fouasse, and Delphin kept on sleeping. They did not succeed in standing up until the dinner hour. They recollected nothing, they were conscious only of having been treated to something extraordinary, something which they did not understand. In the afternoon, as they were all three down at the harbor, the Emperor tried to question them concerning the liquor, now that they had recovered their senses. It was like, perhaps, eau-de-vie with liquorice-juice in it; or rather one might say rum, sugared and burned. They said "Yes"; they said "No." From their replies, the Emperor suspected that it was ratafia; but he would not have sworn to it. That day Rouget and his men had too many pains in their sides to go a-fishing. Moreover, they knew that La Queue had gone out without success that morning, and they talked of waiting until the next day before visiting their jambins. All three of them, seated on blocks of stone, watched the tide come in, their backs rounded, their mouths clammy, half-asleep.

But suddenly Delphin woke up; he jumped on to the stone, his eyes on the distance, crying: "Look, Boss, off there!"

"What?" asked Rouget, who stretched his limbs.

"A cask."

Rouget and Fouasse were at once on their feet, their eyes gleaming, sweeping the horizon.

"Where is it, lad? Where is the cask?" repeated the boss, greatly moved.

"Off there—to the left—that black spot."

The others saw nothing. Then Rouget swore an oath. "Nom de Dieu!"

He had just spotted the cask, big as a lentil on the white water in a slanting ray of the setting sun. And he ran to the "Baleine," followed by Delphin and Fouasse, who darted forward tapping their backs with their heels and making the pebbles roll.

The "Baleine" was just putting out from the harbor when the news that they saw a cask out at sea was circulated in Coqueville. The children, the women, began to run. They shouted: "A cask! a cask!"

"Do you see it? The current is driving it toward Grandport."

"Ah, yes! on the left—a cask! Come, quick!"

And Coqueville came; tumbled down from its rock; the children arrived head over heels, while the women picked up their skirts with both hands to descend quickly. Soon the entire village was on the beach as on the night before.

Margot showed herself for an instant, then she ran back at full speed to the house, where she wished to forestall her father, who was discussing an official process with the Emperor. At last La Queue appeared. He was livid; he said to the *garde champêtre:* "Hold your peace! It's Rouget who has sent you here to beguile me. Well, then, he shall not get it. You'll see!"

When he saw the "Baleine," three hundred metres

out, making with all her oars toward the black dot, rocking in the distance, his fury redoubled. And he shoved Tupain and Brisemotte into the "Zéphir," and he pulled out in turn, repeating: "No, they shall not have it; I'll die sooner!"

Then Coqueville had a fine spectacle; a mad race between the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine." When the latter saw the first leave the harbor, she understood the danger, and shot off with all her speed. She may have been four hundred metres ahead; but the chances remained even, for the "Zéphir" was otherwise light and swift; so excitement was at its height on the beach. The Mahés and the Floches had instinctively formed into two groups, following eagerly the vicissitudes of the struggle, each upholding its own boat. At first the "Baleine" kept her advantage, but as soon as the "Zéphir" spread herself, they saw that she was gaining little by little. The "Baleine" made a supreme effort and succeeded for a few minutes in holding her distance. Then the "Zéphir" once more gained upon the "Baleine," came up with her at extraordinary speed. From that moment on, it was evident that the two barks would meet in the neighborhood of the cask. Victory hung on a circumstance, on the slightest mishap.

"The 'Baleine'! The 'Baleine'!" cried the Mahés.

But they soon ceased shouting. When the "Baleine" was almost touching the cask, the "Zéphir," by a bold maneuvre, managed to pass in front of her and throw the cask to the left, where La Queue harpooned it with a thrust of the boat-hook.

"The 'Zéphir'! the 'Zéphir'!" screamed the Floches.

And the Emperor, having spoken of foul play, big words were exchanged. Margot clapped her hands. The Abbé Radiguet came down with his breviary, made a profound remark which abruptly calmed the people, and then threw them into consternation.

"They will, perhaps, drink it all, these, too," he murmured with a melancholy air.

At sea, between the "Baleine" and the "Zéphir," a violent quarrel broke out. Rouget called La Queue a thief, while the latter called Rouget a good-for-nothing. The men even took up their oars to beat each other down, and the adventure lacked little of turning into a naval combat. More than this, they engaged to meet on land, showing their fists and threatening to disembowel each other as soon as they found each other again.

"The rascal!" grumbled Rouget. "You know, that cask is bigger than the one of yesterday. It's yellow, this one—it ought to be great." Then in accents of despair: "Let's go and see the jambins; there may very possibly be lobsters in them."

And the "Baleine" went on heavily to the left, steering toward the point.

In the "Zéphir," La Queue had to get in a passion in order to hold Tupain and Brisemotte from the cask. The boat-hook, in smashing a hoop, had made a leaking for the red liquid, which the two men tasted from the ends of their fingers, and which they found exquisite. One might easily drink a glass without its producing much effect. But La Queue would not have it.

He caulked the cask and declared that the first who sucked it should have a talk with him. On land, they would see.

"Then," asked Tupain, sullenly, "are we going to draw out the jambins?"

"Yes, right away; there is no hurry!" replied La Queue.

He also gazed lovingly at the barrel. He felt his limbs melt with longing to go in at once and taste it. The fish bored him.

"Bah!" said he at the end of a silence. "Let's go back, for it's late. We will return to-morrow." And he was relaxing his fishing when he noticed another cask at his right, this one very small, and which stood on end, turning on itself like a top. That was the last straw for the nets and the jambins. No one even spoke of them any longer. The "Zéphir" gave chase to the little barrel, which was caught very easily.

During this time a similar adventure overtook the "Baleine." After Rouget had already visited five jambins completely empty, Delphin, always on the watch, cried out that he saw something. But it did not have the appearance of a cask, it was too long.

"It's a beam," said Fouasse.

Rouget let fall his sixth jambin without drawing it out of the water. "Let's go and see, all the same," said he.

As they advanced, they thought they recognized at first a beam, a chest, the trunk of a tree. Then they gave a cry of joy.

It was a real cask, but a very queer cask, such as

they had never seen before. One would have said a tube, bulging in the middle and closed at the two ends by a layer of plaster.

"Ah, that's comical!" cried Rouget, in rapture. "This one I want the Emperor to taste. Come, children, let's go in."

They all agreed not to touch it, and the "Baleine" returned to Coqueville at the same moment as the "Zéphir," in its turn, anchored in the little harbor. Not one inquisitive had left the beach. Cries of joy greeted that unexpected catch of three casks. The *gamins* hurled their caps into the air, while the women had at once gone on the run to look for glasses. It was decided to taste the liquid on the spot. The wreckage belonged to the village. Not one protest arose. Only they formed into two groups, the Mahés surrounded Rouget, the Floches would not let go of La Queue.

"Emperor, the first glass for you!" cried Rouget. "Tell us what it is."

The liquor was of a beautiful golden yellow. The *garde champêtre* raised his glass, looked at it, smelt it, then decided to drink.

"That comes from Holland," said he, after a long silence.

He did not give any other information. All the Mahés drank with deference. It was rather thick, and they stood surprised, for it tasted of flowers. The women found it very good. As for the men, they would have preferred less sugar. Nevertheless, at the bottom it ended by being strong at the third or fourth

glass. The more they drank, the better they liked it. The men became jolly, the women grew funny.

But the Emperor, in spite of his recent quarrels with the Mayor, had gone to hang about the group of Floches.

The biggest cask gave out a dark-red liquor, while they drew from the smallest a liquid white as water from the rock; and it was this latter that was the stiffest, a regular pepper, something that skinned the tongue.

Not one of the Floches recognized it, neither the red nor the white.

There were, however, some wags there. It annoyed them to be regaling themselves without knowing over what.

"I say, Emperor, taste that for me!" said La Queue, thus taking the first step.

The Emperor, who had been waiting for the invitation, posed once more as connoisseur.

"As for the red," he said, "there is orange in that! And for the white," he declared, "that—that is excellent!"

They had to content themselves with these replies, for he shook his head with a knowing air, with the happy look of a man who has given satisfaction to the world.

The Abbé Radiguet, alone, did not seem convinced. As for him, he had the names on the tip of his tongue; and to thoroughly reassure himself, he drank small glasses, one after the other, repeating: "Wait, wait, I know what it is. In a moment I will tell you."

In the mean while, little by little, merriment grew in the group of the Mahés and the group of the Floches. The latter, particularly, laughed very loud because they had mixed the liquors, a thing that excited them the more. For the rest, the one and the other of the groups kept apart. They did not offer each other of their casks, they simply cast sympathetic glances, seized with the unavowed desire to taste their neighbor's liquor, which might possibly be better. The inimical brothers, Tupain and Fouasse, were in close proximity all the evening without showing their fists. It was remarked, also, that Rouget and his wife drank from the same glass. As for Margot, she distributed the liquor among the Floches, and as she filled the glasses too full, and the liquor ran over her fingers, she kept sucking them continually, so well that, though obeying her father who forbade her to drink, she became as fuddled as a girl in vintage time. It was not unbecoming to her; on the contrary, she got rosy all over, her eyes were like candles.

The sun set, the evening was like the softness of springtime. Coqueville had finished the casks and did not dream of going home to dine. They found themselves too comfortable on the beach. When it was pitch night, Margot, sitting apart, felt some one blowing on her neck. It was Delphin, very gay, walking on all fours, prowling behind her like a wolf. She repressed a cry so as not to awaken her father, who would have sent Delphin a kick in the back.

"Go away, imbecile!" she murmured, half angry, half laughing; "you will get yourself caught!"

IV

The following day Coqueville, in rising, found the sun already high above the horizon. The air was softer still, a drowsy sea under a clear sky, one of those times of laziness when it is so good to do nothing. It was a Wednesday. Until breakfast time, Coqueville rested from the fête of the previous evening. Then they went down to the beach to see.

That Wednesday the fish, the Widow Dufeu, M. Mouchel, all were forgotten. La Queue and Rouget did not even speak of visiting their jambins. Toward three o'clock they sighted some casks. Four of them were dancing before the village. The "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" went in chase; but as there was enough for all, they disputed no longer. Each boat had its share. At six o'clock, after having swept all over the little gulf, Rouget and La Queue came in, each with three casks. And the fête began again. The women had brought down tables for convenience. They had brought benches as well; they set up two cafés in the open air, such as they had at Grandport. The Mahés were on the left; the Floches on the right, still separated by a bar of sand. Nevertheless, that evening the Emperor, who went from one group to the other, carried his glasses full, so as to give every one a taste of the six casks. At about nine o'clock they were much gayer than the night before. The next day Coqueville could never remember how it had gone to bed.

Thursday the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" caught

but four casks, two each, but they were enormous. Friday the fishing was superb, undreamed of; there were seven casks, three for Rouget and four for La Queue. Coqueville was entering upon a golden age. They never did anything any more. The fishermen, working off the alcohol of the night before, slept till noon. Then they strolled down to the beach and interrogated the sea. Their sole anxiety was to know what liquor the sea was going to bring them. They waited there for hours, their eyes strained; they raised shouts of joy when wreckage appeared.

The women and the children, from the tops of the rocks, pointed with sweeping gestures even to the least bunch of seaweed rolled in by the waves. And, at all hours, the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" stood ready to leave. They put out, they beat the gulf, they fished for casks, as they had fished for tun; disdaining now the tame mackerel who capered about in the sun, and the lazy sole rocked on the foam of the water. Coqueville watched the fishing, dying of laughter on the sands. Then in the evening they drank the catch.

That which enraptured Coqueville was that the casks did not cease. When there were no more, there were still more! The ship that had been lost must truly have had a pretty cargo aboard; and Coqueville became egoist and merry, joked over the wrecked ship, a regular wine-cellar, enough to intoxicate all the fish of the ocean. Added to that, never did they catch two casks alike; they were of all shapes, of all sizes, of all colors. Then, in every cask there was a different liquor. So the Emperor was plunged into profound

reveries; he who had drunk everything, he could identify nothing any more. La Queue declared that never had he seen such a cargo. The Abbé Radiguet guessed it was an order from some savage king, wishing to set up his wine-cellar. Coqueville, rocked in mysterious intoxication, no longer tried to understand.

The ladies preferred the "creams"; they had cream of moka, of cacao, of mint, of vanilla. Marie Rouget drank one night so much anisette that she was sick.

Margot and the other young ladies tapped the curaçao, the benedictine, the trappistine, the chartreuse. As to the cassis, it was reserved for the little children. Naturally the men rejoiced more when they caught cognacs, rums, gins, everything that burned the mouth. Then surprises produced themselves. A cask of *raki* of Chio, flavored with mastic, stupefied Coqueville, which thought that it had fallen on a cask of essence of turpentine. All the same they drank it, for they must lose nothing; but they talked about it for a long time. Arrack from Batavia, Swedish eau-de-vie with cumin, tuica calugaresca from Rumania, slivowitz from Servia, all equally overturned every idea that Coqueville had of what one should endure. At heart they had a weakness for kümmel and kirschwasser, for liqueurs as pale as water and stiff enough to kill a man.

Heavens! was it possible so many good things had been invented! At Coqueville they had known nothing but eau-de-vie; and, moreover, not every one at that. So their imaginations finished in exultation; they arrived at a state of veritable worship, in face of

that inexhaustible variety, for that which intoxicates. Oh! to get drunk every night on something new, on something one does not even know the name of! It seemed like a fairy-tale, a rain, a fountain, that would spout extraordinary liquids, all the distilled alcohols, perfumed with all the flowers and all the fruits of creation.

So then, Friday evening, there were seven casks on the beach! Coqueville did not leave the beach. They lived there, thanks to the mildness of the season. Never in September had they enjoyed so fine a week. The fête had lasted since Monday, and there was no reason why it should not last forever if Providence should continue to send them casks; for the Abbé Radiguet saw therein the hand of Providence. All business was suspended; what use drudging when pleasure came to them in their sleep? They were all bourgeois, bourgeois who were drinking expensive liquors without having to pay anything at the café. With hands in pocket, Coqueville, basked in the sunshine waiting for the evening's spree. Moreover, it did not sober up; it enjoyed side by side the gaieties of kümmel, of kirschwasser, of ratafia; in seven days they knew the wraths of gin, the tendernesses of curaçao, the laughter of cognac. And Coqueville remained as innocent as a new-born child, knowing nothing about anything, drinking with conviction that which the good Lord sent them.

It was on Friday that the Mahés and the Floches fraternized. They were very jolly that evening. Already, the evening before, distances had drawn nearer,

the most intoxicated had trodden down the bar of sand which separated the two groups. There remained but one step to take. On the side of the Floches the four casks were emptying, while the Mahés were equally finishing their three little barrels; just three liqueurs which made the French flag; one blue, one white, and one red. The blue filled the Floches with jealousy, because a blue liqueur seemed to them something really supernatural. La Queue, grown good-natured now ever since he had been drunk, advanced, a glass in his hand, feeling that he ought to take the first step as magistrate.

"See here, Rouget," he stuttered, "will you drink with me?"

"Willingly," replied Rouget, who was staggering under a feeling of tenderness.

And they fell upon each other's necks. Then they all wept, so great was their emotion. The Mahés and the Floches embraced, they who had been devouring one another for three centuries. The Abbé Radiguet, greatly touched, again spoke of the finger of God. They drank to each other in the three liqueurs, the blue, the white, and the red.

"Vive la France!" cried the Emperor.

The blue was worthless, the white of not much account, but the red was really a success. Then they tapped the casks of the Floches. Then they danced. As there was no band, some good-natured boys clapped their hands, whistling, which excited the girls. The fête became superb. The seven casks were placed in a row; each could choose that which he liked best.

Those who had had enough stretched themselves out on the sands, where they slept for a while; and when they awoke they began again. Little by little the others spread the fun until they took up the whole beach. Right up to midnight they skipped in the open air. The sea had a soft sound, the stars shone in a deep sky, a sky of vast peace. It was the serenity of the infant ages enveloping the joy of a tribe of savages, intoxicated by their first cask of eau-de-vie.

Nevertheless, Coqueville went home to bed again. When there was nothing more left to drink, the Floches and the Mahés helped one another, carried one another, and ended by finding their beds again one way or another. On Saturday the fête lasted until nearly two o'clock in the morning. They had caught six casks, two of them enormous. Fouasse and Tupain almost fought. Tupain, who was wicked when drunk, talked of finishing his brother. But that quarrel disgusted every one, the Floches as well as the Mahés. Was it reasonable to keep on quarreling when the whole village was embracing? They forced the two brothers to drink together. They were sulky. The Emperor promised to watch them. Neither did the Rouget household get on well. When Marie had taken anisette she was prodigal in her attentions to Brisemotte, which Rouget could not behold with a calm eye, especially since having become sensitive, he also wished to be loved. The Abbé Radiguet, full of forbearance, did well in preaching forgiveness of injuries; they feared an accident.

"Bah!" said La Queue; "all will arrange itself. If

the fishing is good to-morrow, you will see— Your health!"

However, La Queue himself was not yet perfect. He still kept his eye on Delphin and leveled kicks at him whenever he saw him approach Margot. The Emperor was indignant, for there was no common sense in preventing two young people from laughing. But La Queue always swore to kill his daughter sooner than give her to "the little one." Moreover, Margot would not be willing.

"Isn't it so? You are too proud," he cried. "Never would you marry a ragamuffin!"

"Never, papa!" answered Margot.

Saturday, Margot drank a great deal of sugary liqueur. No one had any idea of such sugar. As she was no longer on her guard, she soon found herself sitting close to the cask. She laughed, happy, in paradise; she saw stars, and it seemed to her that there was music within her, playing dance tunes. Then it was that Delphin slipped into the shadow of the casks. He took her hand; he asked: "Say, Margot, will you?"

She kept on smiling. Then she replied: "It is papa who will not."

"Oh! that's nothing," said the little one; "you know the old ones never will—provided you are willing, you." And he grew bold, he planted a kiss on her neck. She bridled; shivers ran along her shoulders. "Stop! You tickle me."

But she talked no more of giving him a slap. In the first place, she was not able to, for her hands were too weak. Then it seemed nice to her, those little

kisses on the neck. It was like the liqueur that enervated her so deliciously. She ended by turning her head and extending her chin, just like a cat.

"There!" she stammered, "there under the ear—that tickles me. Oh! that is nice!"

They had both forgotten La Queue. Fortunately the Emperor was on guard. He pointed them out to the Abbé.

"Look there, Curé—it would be better to marry them."

"Morals would gain thereby," declared the priest sententiously.

And he charged himself with the matter for the morrow. 'Twas he himself that would speak to La Queue. Meanwhile La Queue had drunk so much that the Emperor and the Curé were forced to carry him home. On the way they tried to reason with him on the subject of his daughter; but they could draw from him nothing but growls. Behind them, in the untroubled night, Delphin led Margot home.

The next day by four o'clock the "Zéphir" and the "Baleine" had already caught seven casks. At six o'clock the "Zéphir" caught two more. That made nine.

Then Coqueville fêted Sunday. It was the seventh day that it had been drunk. And the fête was complete—a fête such as no one had ever seen, and which no one will ever see again. Speak of it in Lower Normandy, and they will tell you with laughter, "Ah! yes, the fête at Coqueville!"

V

In the mean while, since the Tuesday, M. Mouchel had been surprised at not seeing either Rouget or La Queue arrive at Grandport. What the devil could those fellows be doing? The sea was fine, the fishing ought to be splendid. Very possibly they wished to bring a whole load of soles and lobsters in all at once. And he was patient until the Wednesday.

Wednesday, M. Mouchel was angry. You must know that the Widow Dufeu was not a commodious person. She was a woman who in a flash came to high words. Although he was a handsome fellow, blond and powerful, he trembled before her, especially since he had dreams of marrying her, always with little attentions, free to subdue her with a slap if he ever became her master. Well, that Wednesday morning the Widow Dufeu stormed, complaining that the bundles were no longer forwarded, that the sea failed; and she accused him of running after the girls of the coast instead of busying himself with the whiting and the mackerel which ought to be yielding in abundance. M. Mouchel, vexed, fell back on Coqueville's singular breach of honor. For a moment surprise calmed the Widow Dufeu. What was Coqueville dreaming about? Never had it so conducted itself before. But she declared immediately that she had nothing to do with Coqueville; that it was M. Mouchel's business to look into matters, that she should take a partner if he allowed himself to be played with again by the fishermen. In a word, much disquieted, he sent Rouget and

La Queue to the devil. Perhaps, after all, they would come to-morrow.

The next day, Thursday, neither the one nor the other appeared. Toward evening, M. Mouchel, desperate, climbed the rock to the left of Grandport, from which one could see in the distance Coqueville, with its yellow spot of beach. He gazed at it a long time. The village had a tranquil look in the sun, light smoke was rising from the chimneys; no doubt the women were preparing the soup. M. Mouchel was satisfied that Coqueville was still in its place, that a rock from the cliff had not crushed it, and he understood less and less. As he was about to descend again, he thought he could make out two black points on the gulf; the "Baleine" and the "Zéphir." After that he went back to calm the Widow Dufeu. Coqueville was fishing. The night passed. Friday was here. Still nothing of Coqueville. M. Mouchel climbed to his rock more than ten times. He was beginning to lose his head; the Widow Dufeu behaved abominably to him, without his finding anything to reply. Coqueville was always there, in the sun, warming itself like a lazy lizard. Only, M. Mouchel saw no more smoke. The village seemed dead. Had they all died in their holes? On the beach, there was quite a movement, but that might be seaweed rocked by the tide. Saturday, still no one. The Widow Dufeu scolded no more; her eyes were fixed, her lips white. M. Mouchel passed two hours on the rock. A curiosity grew in him, a purely personal need of accounting to himself for the strange immobility of the village. The old

walls sleeping beatifically in the sun ended by worrying him. His resolution was taken; he would set out that Monday very early in the morning and try to get down there near nine o'clock.

It was not a promenade to go to Coqueville. M. Mouchel preferred to follow the route by land, in that way he would come upon the village without their expecting him. A wagon carried him as far as Robineux, where he left it under a shed, for it would not have been prudent to risk it in the middle of the gorge. And he set off bravely, having to make nearly seven kilometers over the most abominable of roads. The route was otherwise of a wild beauty; it descended by continual turns between two enormous ledges of rock, so narrow in places that three men could not walk abreast. Farther on it skirted the precipices; the gorge opened abruptly; and one caught glimpses of the sea, of immense blue horizons. But M. Mouchel was not in a state of mind to admire the landscape. He swore as the pebbles rolled under his feet. It was the fault of Coqueville, he promised to shake up those do-nothings well. But, in the meantime, he was approaching. All at once, in the turning at the last rock, he saw the twenty houses of the village hanging to the flank of the cliff.

Nine o'clock struck. One would have believed it June, so blue and warm was the sky; a superb season, limpid air, gilded by the dust of the sun, refreshed by the good smell of the sea. M. Mouchel entered the only street of the village, where he came very often; and as he passed before Rouget's house, he went in.

The house was empty. Then he cast his eye toward Fouasse's—Tupain's—Brisemotte's. Not a soul; all the doors open, and no one in the rooms. What did it mean? A light chill began to creep over his flesh. Then he thought of the authorities. Certainly, the Emperor would reassure him. But the Emperor's house was empty like the others. Even to the *garde champêtre,* there was failure! That village, silent and deserted, terrified him now. He ran to the Mayor's. There another surprise awaited him: the house was found in an abominable mess; they had not made the beds in three days; dirty dishes littered the place; chairs seemed to indicate a fight. His mind upset, dreaming of cataclysms, M. Mouchel determined to go on to the end, and he entered the church. No more curé than mayor. All the authorities, even religion itself had vanished. Coqueville abandoned, slept without a breath, without a dog, without a cat. Not even a fowl; the hens had taken themselves off. Nothing, a void, silence, a leaden sleep under the great blue sky.

Parbleu! It was no wonder that Coqueville brought no more fish! Coqueville had moved away. Coqueville was dead. He must notify the police. The mysterious catastrophe exalted M. Mouchel, when, with the idea of descending to the beach, he uttered a cry. In the midst of the sands, the whole population lay stretched. He thought of a general massacre. But the sonorous snores came to undeceive him. During the night of Sunday Coqueville had feasted so late that it had found itself in absolute inability to go home to bed. So it had slept on the sand, just

where it had fallen, around the nine casks, completely empty.

Yes, all Coqueville was snoring there; I hear the children, the women, the old people, and the men. Not one was on his feet. There were some on their stomachs, there were some on their backs; others held themselves *en chien de fusils*.[3] As one makes his bed so must one lie on it. And the fellows found themselves, happen what may, scattered in their drunkenness like a handful of leaves driven by the wind. The men had rolled over, heads lower than heels. It was a scene full of good-fellowship; a dormitory in the open air; honest family folk taking their ease; for where there is care, there is no pleasure.

It was just at the new moon. Coqueville, thinking it had blown out its candle, had abandoned itself to the darkness. Then the day dawned; and now the sun was flaming, a sun which fell perpendicularly on the sleepers, powerless to make them open their eyelids. They slept rudely, all their faces beaming with the fine innocence of drunkards. The hens at early morning must have strayed down to peck at the casks, for they were drunk; they, too, sleeping on the sands. There were also five cats and five dogs, their paws in the air, drunk from licking the glasses glistening with sugar.

For a moment M. Mouchel walked about among the sleepers, taking care not to step on any of them. He understood, for at Grandport they, too, had received casks from the wreck of the English ship. All his wrath left him. What a touching and moral spectacle!

[3] Primed for the event.

Coqueville reconciled, the Mahés and the Floches sleeping together! With the last glass the deadliest enemies had embraced. Tupain and Fouasse lay there snoring, hand in hand, like brothers, incapable of coming to dispute a legacy. As to the Rouget household, it offered a still more amiable picture, Marie slept between Rouget and Brisemotte, as much as to say that henceforth they were to live thus, happy, all the three.

But one group especially exhibited a scene of family tenderness. It was Delphin and Margot; one on the neck of the other, they slept cheek to cheek, their lips still opened for a kiss. At their feet the Emperor, sleeping crosswise, guarded them. Above them La Queue snored like a father satisfied at having settled his daughter, while the Abbé Radiguet, fallen there like the others, with arms outspread, seemed to bless them. In her sleep Margot still extended her rosy muzzle like an amorous cat who loves to have one scratch her under the chin.

The fête ended with a marriage. And M. Mouchel himself later married the Widow Dufeu, whom he beat to a jelly. Speak of that in Lower Normandy, they will tell you with a laugh, "Ah! yes, the fête at Coqueville!"

THE LOST CHILD

BY FRANÇOIS ÉDOUARD JOACHIM COPPÉE



François Coppée, Poet of the Humble, was born at Paris in 1842. His first collection of poems was called "Le Reliquaire," 1866, and already exhibited to an astonishing degree the full equipment of a poet, much as Keats did in his first work. But Coppée's great reputation began to grow from the date of "Passant," 1869, exquisite comedies in verse, and "Le Luthier de Crèmone," an agreeable and touching little piece, and his brilliantly written romantic dramas, full of fine bursts of eloquence.

Besides poems and plays, he has written five or six volumes of short stories remarkable for grace of sentiment, and a number of novels, chronicles, etc.

Coppée's happy vein seems to be the familiar narrative, the genre picture. He shows a fine sympathy for the miseries and the virtues of the obscure.

THE LOST CHILD

BY FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

ON that morning, which was the morning before Christmas, two important events happened simultaneously—the sun rose, and so did M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy.

Unquestionably the sun, illuminating suddenly the whole of Paris with its morning rays, is an old friend, regarded with affection by everybody. It is particularly welcome after a fortnight of misty atmosphere and gray skies, when the wind has cleared the air and allowed the sun's rays to reach the earth again. Besides all of which the sun is a person of importance. Formerly, he was regarded as a god, and was called Osiris, Apollyon, and I don't know what else. But do not imagine that because the sun is so important he is of greater influence than M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy, millionaire banker, director of the *Comptoir Général de Crédit,* administrator of several big companies, deputy and member of the General Counsel of the Eure, officer of the Legion of Honor, etc., etc. And whatever opinion the sun may have about himself, he certainly has not a higher opinion than M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy has of *him*self. So we are authorized to state, and we consider ourselves justified in stating, that on the morning in question, at about a

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quarter to eight, the sun and M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy rose.

Certainly the manner of rising of these two great powers mentioned was not the same. The good old sun began by doing a great many pretty actions. As the sleet had, during the night, covered the bare branches of the trees in the boulevard Malesherbes, where the *hôtel* Godefroy is situated, with a powdered coating, the great magician sun amused himself by transforming the branches into great bouquets of red coral. At the same time he scattered his rays impartially on those poor passers-by whom necessity sent out, so early in the morning, to gain their daily bread. He even had a smile for the poor clerk, who, in a thin overcoat, was hurrying to his office, as well as for the *grisette,* shivering under her thin, insufficient clothing; for the workman carrying half a loaf under his arm, for the car-conductor as he punched the tickets, and for the dealer in roast chestnuts, who was roasting his first panful. In short, the sun gave pleasure to everybody in the world. M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy, on the contrary, rose in quite a different frame of mind. On the previous evening he had dined with the Minister for Agriculture. The dinner, from the removal of the *potage* to the salad, bristled with truffles, and the banker's stomach, aged forty-seven years, experienced the burning and biting of pyrosis. So the manner in which M. Jean-Baptiste Godefroy rang for his valet-de-chambre was so expressive that, as he got some warm water for his master's shaving, Charles said to the kitchen-maid:

"There he goes! The monkey is barbarously ill-tempered again this morning. My poor Gertrude, we're going to have a miserable day."

Whereupon, walking on tiptoe, with eyes modestly cast down, he entered the chamber of his master, opened the curtains, lit the fire, and made all the necessary preparations for the toilet with the discreet demeanor and respectful gestures of a sacristan placing the sacred vessels on the altar for the priest.

"What sort of weather this morning?" demanded M. Godefroy curtly, as he buttoned his undervest of gray swandown upon a stomach that was already a little too prominent.

"Very cold, sir," replied Charles meekly. "At six o'clock the thermometer marked seven degrees above zero. But, as you will see, sir, the sky is quite clear, and I think we are going to have a fine morning."

In stropping his razor, M. Godefroy approached the window, drew aside one of the hangings, looked on the boulevard, which was bathed in brightness, and made a slight grimace which bore some resemblance to a smile.

It is all very well to be perfectly stiff and correct, and to know that it is bad taste to show feeling of any kind in the presence of domestics, but the appearance of the roguish sun in the middle of December sends such a glow of warmth to the heart that it is impossible to disguise the fact. So M. Godefroy deigned, as before observed, to smile. If some one had whispered to the opulent banker that his smile had anything in common with that of the printer's boy, who

was enjoying himself by making a slide on the pavement, M. Godefroy would have been highly incensed. But it really was so all the same; and during the space of one minute this man, who was so occupied by business matters, this leading light in the financial and political worlds, indulged in the childish pastime of watching the passers-by, and following with his eyes the files of conveyances as they gaily rolled in the sunshine.

But pray do not be alarmed. Such a weakness could not last long. People of no account, and those who have nothing to do, may be able to let their time slip by in doing nothing. It is very well for women, children, poets, and riffraff. M. Godefroy had other fish to fry; and the work of the day which was commencing promised to be exceptionally heavy. From half-past eight to ten o'clock he had a meeting at his office with a certain number of gentlemen, all of whom bore a striking resemblance to M. Godefroy. Like him, they were very nervous; they had risen with the sun, they were all *blasés,* and they all had the same object in view—to gain money. After breakfast (which he took after the meeting), M. Godefroy had to leap into his carriage and rush to the Bourse, to exchange a few words with other gentlemen who had also risen at dawn, but who had not the least spark of imagination among them. (The conversations were always on the same subject—money.) From there, without losing an instant, M. Godefroy went to preside over another meeting of acquaintances entirely void of compassion and tenderness. The meeting was held round a baize-

covered table, which was strewn with heaps of papers and well provided with ink-wells. The conversation again turned on money, and various methods of gaining it. After the aforesaid meeting he, in his capacity of deputy, had to appear before several commissions (always held in rooms where there were baize-covered tables and ink-wells and heaps of papers). There he found men as devoid of sentiment as he was, all utterly incapable of neglecting any occasion of gaining money, but who, nevertheless, had the extreme goodness to sacrifice several hours of the afternoon to the glory of France.

After having quickly shaved he donned a morning suit, the elegant cut and finish of which showed that the old beau of nearly fifty had not ceased trying to please. When he shaved he spared the narrow strip of pepper-and-salt beard round his chin, as it gave him the air of a trustworthy family man in the eyes of the Arrogants and of fools in general. Then he descended to his cabinet, where he received the file of men who were entirely occupied by one thought—that of augmenting their capital. These gentlemen discussed several projected enterprises, all of them of considerable importance, notably that of a new railroad to be laid across a wild desert. Another scheme was for the founding of monster works in the environs of Paris, another of a mine to be worked in one of the South American republics. It goes without saying that no one asked if the railway would have passengers or goods to carry, or if the proposed works should manufacture cotton nightcaps or distil whisky; whether the

mine was to be of virgin gold or of second-rate copper: certainly not. The conversation of M. Godefroy's morning callers turned exclusively upon the profits which it would be possible to realize during the week which should follow the issue of the shares. They discussed particularly the values of the shares, which they knew would be destined before long to be worth less than the paper on which they were printed in fine style.

These conversations, bristling with figures, lasted till ten o'clock precisely, and then the director of the *Comptoir Général de Crédit,* who, by the way, was an honest man—at least, as honest as is to be found in business—courteously conducted his last visitor to the head of the stairway. The visitor named was an old villain, as rich as Crœsus, who, by a not uncommon chance, enjoyed the general esteem of the public; whereas, had justice been done to him, he would have been lodging at the expense of the State in one of those large establishments provided by a thoughtful government for smaller delinquents; and there he would have pursued a useful and healthy calling for a lengthy period, the exact length having been fixed by the judges of the supreme court. But M. Godefroy showed him out relentlessly, notwithstanding his importance—it was absolutely necessary to be at the Bourse at 11 o'clock—and went into the dining-room.

It was a luxuriously furnished room. The furniture and plate would have served to endow a cathedral. Nevertheless, notwithstanding that M. Godefroy took a gulp of bicarbonate of soda, his indigestion refused to subside, consequently the banker could only take the

scantiest breakfast—that of a dyspeptic. In the midst of such luxury, and under the eye of a well-paid butler, M. Godefroy could only eat a couple of boiled eggs and nibble a little mutton chop. The man of money trifled with dessert—took only a crumb of Roquefort—not more than two cents' worth. Then the door opened and an overdressed but charming little child—young Raoul, four years old—the son of the company director, entered the room, accompanied by his German nursery governess.

This event occurred every day at the same hour—a quarter to eleven, precisely, while the carriage which was to take the banker to the Bourse was awaiting the gentleman who had only a quarter of an hour to give to paternal sentiment. It was not that he did not love his son. He did love him—nay, he adored him, in his own particular way. But then, you know, business *is* business.

At the age of forty-two, when already worldly-wise and *blasé*, he had fancied himself in love with the daughter of one of his club friends—Marquis de Neufontaine, an old rascal—a nobleman, but one whose card-playing was more than open to suspicion, and who would have been expelled from the club more than once but for the influence of M. Godefroy. The nobleman was only too happy to become the father-in-law of a man who would pay his debts, and without any scruples he handed over his daughter—a simple and ingenuous child of seventeen, who was taken from a convent to be married—to the worldly banker. The girl was certainly sweet and pretty, but she had no

dowry except numerous aristocratic prejudices and romantic illusions, and her father thought he was fortunate in getting rid of her on such favorable terms. M. Godefroy, who was the son of an avowed old miser of Andelys, had always remained a man of the people, and intensely vulgar. In spite of his improved circumstances, he had not improved. His entire lack of tact and refinement was painful to his young wife, whose tenderest feelings he ruthlessly and thoughtlessly trampled upon. Things were looking unpromising, when, happily for her, Madame Godefroy died in giving birth to her firstborn. When he spoke of his deceased wife, the banker waxed poetical, although had she lived they would have been divorced in six months. His son he loved dearly for several reasons—first, because the child was an only son; secondly, because he was a scion of two such houses as Godefroy and Neufontaine; finally, because the man of money had naturally great respect for the heir to many millions. So the youngster had golden rattles and other similar toys, and was brought up like a young Dauphin. But his father, overwhelmed with business worries, could never give the child more than fifteen minutes per day of his precious time—and, as on the day mentioned, it was always during "cheese" —and for the rest of the day the father abandoned the child to the care of the servants.

"Good morning, Raoul."

"Good morning, papa."

And the company director, having put his serviette away, sat young Raoul on his left knee, took the child's

head between his big paws, and in stroking and kissing it actually forgot all his money matters and even his note of the afternoon, which was of great importance to him, as by it he could gain quite an important amount of patronage.

"Papa," said little Raoul suddenly, "will Father Christmas put anything in my shoe to-night?"

The father answered with "Yes, if you are a good child." This was very striking from a man who was a pronounced freethinker, who always applauded every anti-clerical attack in the Chamber with a vigorous "Hear, hear." He made a mental note that he must buy some toys for his child that very afternoon.

Then he turned to the nursery governess with:

"Are you quite satisfied with Raoul, Mademoiselle Bertha?"

Mademoiselle Bertha became as red as a peony at being addressed, as if the question were scarcely *comme il faut,* and replied by a little imbecile snigger, which seemed fully to satisfy M. Godefroy's curiosity about his son's conduct.

"It's fine to-day," said the financier, "but cold. If you take Raoul to Monceau Park, mademoiselle, please be careful to wrap him up well."

Mademoiselle, by a second fit of idiotic smiling, having set at rest M. Godefroy's doubts and fears on that essential point, he kissed his child, left the room hastily, and in the hall was enveloped in his fur coat by Charles, who also closed the carriage door. Then the faithful fellow went off to the café which he fre-

quented, Rue de Miromesnil, where he had promised to meet the coachman of the baroness who lived opposite, to play a game of billiards, thirty up—and spot-barred, of course.

Thanks to the brown bay—for which a thousand francs over and above its value was paid by M. Godefroy as a result of a sumptuous snail supper given to that gentleman's coachman by the horse-dealer—thanks to the expensive brown bay which certainly went well, the financier was able to get through his many engagements satisfactorily. He appeared punctually at the Bourse, sat at several committee tables, and at a quarter to five, by voting with the ministry, he helped to reassure France and Europe that the rumors of a ministerial crisis had been totally unfounded. He voted with the ministry because he had succeeded in obtaining the favors which he demanded as the price of his vote.

After he had thus nobly fulfilled his duty to himself and his country, M. Godefroy remembered what he had said to his child on the subject of Father Christmas, and gave his coachman the address of a dealer in toys. There he bought, and had put in his carriage, a fantastic rocking-horse, mounted on castors—a whip in each ear; a box of leaden soldiers—all as exactly alike as those grenadiers of the Russian regiment of the time of Paul I, who all had black hair and snub noses; and a score of other toys, all equally striking and costly. Then, as he returned home, softly reposing in his well-swung carriage, the rich banker, who, after all, was a father, began to

think with pride of his little boy and to form plans for his future.

When the child grew up he should have an education worthy of a prince, and he would be one, too, for there was no longer any aristocracy except that of money, and his boy would have a capital of about 30,000,000 francs.

If his father, a pettifogging provincial lawyer, who had formerly dined in the Latin Quarter when in Paris, who had remarked every evening when putting on a white tie that he looked as fine as if he were going to a wedding—if he had been able to accumulate an enormous fortune, and to become thereby a power in the republic; if he had been able to obtain in marriage a young lady, one of whose ancestors had fallen at Marignan, what an important personage little Raoul might become. M. Godefroy built all sorts of air-castles for his boy, forgetting that Christmas is the birthday of a very poor little child, son of a couple of vagrants, born in a stable, where the parents only found lodging through charity.

In the midst of the banker's dreams the coachman cried: "Door, please," and drove into the yard. As he went up the steps M. Godefroy was thinking that he had barely time to dress for dinner; but on entering the vestibule he found all the domestics crowded in front of him in a state of alarm and confusion. In a corner, crouching on a seat, was the German nursery-governess, crying. When she saw the banker she buried her face in her hands and wept still more copi-

ously than before. M. Godefroy felt that some misfortune had happened.

"What's the meaning of all this? What's amiss? What has happened?"

Charles, the *valet de chambre*, a sneaking rascal of the worst type, looked at his master with eyes full of pity and stammered: "Mr. Raoul—"

"My boy?"

"Lost, sir. The stupid German did it. Since four o'clock this afternoon he has not been seen."

The father staggered back like one who had been hit by a ball. The German threw herself at his feet, screaming: "Mercy, mercy!" and the domestics all spoke at the same time.

"Bertha didn't go to *parc Monceau*. She lost the child over there on the fortifications. We have sought him all over, sir. We went to the office for you, sir, and then to the Chamber, but you had just left. Just imagine, the German had a rendezvous with her lover every day, beyond the ramparts, near the gate of Asnières. What a shame! It is a place full of low gipsies and strolling players. Perhaps the child has been stolen. Yes, sir, we informed the police at once. How could we imagine such a thing? A hypocrite, that German! She had a rendezvous, doubtless, with a countryman—a Prussian spy, sure enough!"

His son lost! M. Godefroy seemed to have a torrent of blood rushing through his head. He sprang at Mademoiselle, seized her by the arms and shook her furiously.

"Where did you lose him, you miserable girl? Tell

me the truth before I shake you to pieces. Do you hear? Do you hear?"

But the unfortunate girl could only cry and beg for mercy.

The banker tried to be calm. No, it was impossible. Nobody would dare to steal *his* boy. Somebody would find him and bring him back. Of that there could be no doubt. He could scatter money about right and left, and could have the entire police force at his orders. And he would set to work at once, for not an instant should be lost.

"Charles, don't let the horses be taken out. You others, see that this girl doesn't escape. I'm going to the Prefecture."

And M. Godefroy, with his heart thumping against his sides as if it would break them, his hair wild with fright, darted into his carriage, which at once rolled off as fast as the horses could take it. What irony! The carriage was full of glittering playthings, which sparkled every time a gaslight shone on them. For the next day was the birthday of the divine Infant at whose cradle wise men and simple shepherds alike adored.

"My poor little Raoul! Poor darling! Where is my boy?" repeated the father as in his anguish he dug his nails into the cushions of the carriage. At that moment all his titles and decorations, his honors, his millions, were valueless to him. He had one single idea burning in his brain. "My poor child! Where is my child?"

At last he reached the Prefecture of Police. But

no one was there—the office had been deserted for some time.

"I am M. Godefroy, deputy from L'Eure— My little boy is lost in Paris; a child of four years. I must see the Prefect."

He slipped a louis into the hand of the *concièrge*.

The good old soul, a veteran with a gray mustache, less for the sake of the money than out of compassion for the poor father, led him to the Prefect's private apartments. M. Godefroy was finally ushered into the room of the man in whom were centred all his hopes. He was in evening dress, and wore a monocle; his manner was frigid and rather pretentious. The distressed father, whose knees trembled through emotion, sank into an armchair, and, bursting into tears, told of the loss of his boy—told the story stammeringly and with many breaks, for his voice was choked by sobs.

The Prefect, who was also father of a family, was inwardly moved at the sight of his visitor's grief, but he repressed his emotion and assumed a cold and self-important air.

"You say, sir, that your child has been missing since four o'clock."

"Yes."

"Just when night was falling, confound it. He isn't at all precocious, speaks very little, doesn't know where he lives, and can't even pronounce his own name?"

"Unfortunately that is so."

"Not far from Asnières gate? A suspected quarter.

But cheer up. We have a very intelligent *Commissaire de Police* there. I'll telephone to him."

. . . . . .

The distressed father was left alone for five minutes. How his temples throbbed and his heart beat!

Then, suddenly, the Prefect reappeared, smiling with satisfaction. "Found!"

Whereupon M. Godefroy rushed to the Prefect, whose hand he pressed till that functionary winced with the pain.

"I must acknowledge that we were exceedingly fortunate. The little chap is blond, isn't he? Rather pale? In blue velvet? Black felt hat, with a white feather in it?"

"Yes, yes; that's he. That's my little Raoul."

"Well, he's at the house of a poor fellow down in that quarter who had just been at the police office to make his declaration to the Commissaire. Here's his address, which I took down: '*Pierron, rue des Cailloux, Levallois-Perret.*' With good horses you may reach your boy in less than an hour. Certainly, you won't find him in an aristocratic quarter; his surroundings won't be of the highest. The man who found him is only a small dealer in vegetables."

But that was of no importance to M. Godefroy, who, having expressed his gratitude to the Prefect, leaped down the stairs four at a time, and sprang into his carriage. At that moment he realized how devotedly he loved his child. As he drove away he no longer thought of little Raoul's princely education and mag-

nificent inheritance. He was decided never again to hand over the child entirely to the hands of servants, and he also made up his mind to devote less time to monetary matters and the glory of France and attend more to his own. The thought also occurred to him that France wouldn't be likely to suffer from the neglect. He had hitherto been ashamed to recognize the existence of an old-maid sister of his father, but he decided to send for her to his house. She would certainly shock his lackeys by her primitive manners and ideas. But what of that? She would take care of his boy, which to him was of much more importance than the good opinion of his servants. The financier, who was always in a hurry, never felt so eager to arrive punctually at a committee meeting as he was to reach the lost little one. For the first time in his life he was longing through pure affection to take the child in his arms.

The carriage rolled rapidly along in the clear, crisp night air down boulevard Malesherbes; and, having crossed the ramparts and passed the large houses, plunged into the quiet solitude of suburban streets. When the carriage stopped M. Godefroy saw a wretched hovel, on which was the number he was seeking; it was the house where Pierron lived. The door of the house opened immediately, and a big, rough-looking fellow with red mustache appeared. One of his sleeves was empty. Seeing the gentleman in the carriage, Pierron said cheerily: "So you are the little one's father. Don't be afraid. The little darling is quite safe," and, stepping aside in order to allow

M. Godefroy to pass, he placed his finger on his lips with: "Hush! The little one is asleep!"

Yes, it was a real hovel. By the dim light of a little oil lamp M. Godefroy could just distinguish a dresser from which a drawer was missing, some broken chairs, a round table on which stood a beer-mug which was half empty, three glasses, some cold meat on a plate, and on the bare plaster of the wall two gaudy pictures—a bird's-eye view of the Exposition of 1889, with the Eiffel Tower in bright blue, and the portrait of General Boulanger when a handsome young lieutenant. This last evidence of weakness of the tenant of the house may well be excused, since it was shared by nearly everybody in France. The man took the lamp and went on tiptoe to the corner of the room where, on a clean bed, two little fellows were fast asleep. In the little one, around whom the other had thrown a protecting arm, M. Godefroy recognized his son.

"The youngsters were tired to death, and so sleepy," said Pierron, trying to soften his rough voice. "I had no idea when you would come, so gave them some supper and put them to bed, and then I went to make a declaration at the police office. Zidore generally sleeps up in the garret, but I thought they would be better here, and that I should be better able to watch them."

M. Godefroy, however, scarcely heard the explanation. Strangely moved, he looked at the two sleeping infants on an iron bedstead and covered with an old blanket which had once been used either in barracks

or hospital. Little Raoul, who was still in his velvet suit, looked so frail and delicate compared with his companion that the banker almost envied the latter his brown complexion.

"Is he your boy?" he asked Pierron.

"No," answered he. "I am a bachelor, and don't suppose I shall ever marry, because of my accident. You see, a dray passed over my arm—that was all. Two years ago a neighbor of mine died, when that child was only five years old. The poor mother really died of starvation. She wove wreaths for the cemeteries, but could make nothing worth mentioning at that trade—not enough to live. However, she worked for the child for five years, and then the neighbors had to buy wreaths for her. So I took care of the youngster. Oh, it was nothing much, and I was soon repaid. He is seven years old, and is a sharp little fellow, so he helps me a great deal. On Sundays and Thursdays, and the other days after school, he helps me push my handcart. Zidore is a smart little chap. It was he who found your boy."

"What!" exclaimed M. Godefroy—"that child!"

"Oh, he's quite a little man, I assure you. When he left school he found your child, who was walking on ahead, crying like a fountain. He spoke to him and comforted him, like an old grandfather. The difficulty is, that one can't easily understand what your little one says—English words are mixed up with German and French. So we couldn't get much out of him, nor could we learn his address. Zidore brought him to me—I wasn't far away; and then all the old

women in the place came round chattering and croaking like so many frogs, and all full of advice.

" 'Take him to the police,' " said some.

But Zidore protested.

"That would scare him," said he, for like all Parisians, he has no particular liking for the police—"and besides, your little one didn't wish to leave him. So I came back here with the child as soon as I could. They had supper, and then off to bed. Don't they look sweet?"

When he was in his carriage, M. Godefroy had decided to reward the finder of his child handsomely—to give him a handful of that gold so easily gained. Since entering the house he had seen a side of human nature with which he was formerly unacquainted—the brave charity of the poor in their misery. The courage of the poor girl who had worked herself to death weaving wreaths to keep her child; the generosity of the poor cripple in adopting the orphan, and above all, the intelligent goodness of the little street Arab in protecting the child who was still smaller than himself—all this touched M. Godefroy deeply and set him reflecting. For the thought had occurred to him that there were other cripples who needed to be looked after as well as Pierron, and other orphans as well as Zidore. He also debated whether it would not be better to employ his time looking after them, and whether money might not be put to a better use than merely gaining money. Such was his reverie as he stood looking at the two sleeping children. Finally, he turned round to study the features of the greengrocer,

and was charmed by the loyal expression in the face of the man, and his clear, truthful eyes.

"My friend," said M. Godefroy, "you and your adopted son have rendered me an immense service. I shall soon prove to you that I am not ungrateful. But, for to-day—I see that you are not in comfortable circumstances, and I should like to leave a small proof of my thankfulness."

But the hand of the cripple arrested that of the banker, which was diving into his coat-pocket where he kept bank-notes.

"No, sir; no! Anybody else would have done just as we have done. I will not accept any recompense; but pray don't take offense. Certainly, I am not rolling in wealth, but please excuse my pride—that of an old soldier; I have the Tonquin medal—and I don't wish to eat food which I haven't earned."

"As you like," said the financier; "but an old soldier like you is capable of something better. You are too good to push a handcart. I will make some arrangement for you, never fear."

The cripple responded by a quiet smile, and said coldly: "Well, sir, if you really wish to do something for me—"

"You'll let me care for Zidore, won't you?" cried M. Godefroy, eagerly.

"That I will, with the greatest of pleasure," responded Pierron, joyfully. "I have often thought about the child's future. He is a sharp little fellow. His teachers are delighted with him."

Then Pierron suddenly stopped, and an expression

came over his face which M. Godefroy at once interpreted as one of distrust. The thought evidently was: "Oh, when he has once left us he'll forget us entirely."

"You can safely pick the child up in your arms and take him to the carriage. He'll be better at home than here, of course. Oh, you needn't be afraid of disturbing him. He is fast asleep, and you can just pick him up. He must have his shoes on first, though."

Following Pierron's glance M. Godefroy perceived on the hearth, where a scanty coke fire was dying out, two pairs of children's shoes—the elegant ones of Raoul, and the rough ones of Zidore. Each pair contained a little toy and a package of bonbons.

"Don't think about that," said Pierron in an abashed tone. "Zidore put the shoes there. You know children still believe in Christmas and the child Jesus, whatever scholars may say about fables; so, as I came back from the *commissaire*, as I didn't know whether your boy would have to stay here to-night, I got those things for them both."

At which the eyes of M. Godefroy, the freethinker, the hardened capitalist, and *blasé* man of the world, filled with tears.

He rushed out of the house, but returned in a minute with his arms full of the superb mechanical horse, the box of leaden soldiers, and the rest of the costly playthings bought by him in the afternoon, and which had not even been taken out of the carriage.

"My friend, my dear friend," said he to the greengrocer, "see, these are the presents which Christmas has brought to my little Raoul. I want him to find

them here, when he awakens, and to share them with Zidore, who will henceforth be his playmate and friend. You'll trust me now, won't you? I'll take care both of Zidore and of you, and then I shall ever remain in your debt, for not only have you found my boy, but you have also reminded me, who am rich and lived only for myself, that there are other poor who need to be looked after. I swear by these two sleeping children, I won't forget them any longer."

Such is the miracle which happened on the 24th of December of last year, ladies and gentlemen, at Paris, in the full flow of modern egotism. It doesn't sound likely—that I own; and I am compelled to attribute this miraculous event to the influence of the Divine Child who came down to earth nearly nineteen centuries ago to command men to love one another.

PUTOIS

BY ANATOLE FRANCE



The gentle Anatole France, with "vast learning worn with an almost mocking air," conserver of pure, unaffected French, chief of the school inaugurating the sociological novel, the fiction of ideas, was born at Paris in 1844. Since his first attempt at verse, he has written only in prose, "The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard," in 1881, giving him at once his place in literature and winning a crown from the Academy. Besides "Thäis," a masterpiece of color and construction, he has written volumes of contemporary criticism and history—but in all he writes he figures forth the soul of Anatole France, a complex, subtle soul of varied moods, attached to no religion, with sympathy for all. His style, pure as spring water, is flavored with a delicate irony. Anatole France, or Anatole François Thibault, to use his real name, succeeded Jules Claretie on "Le Temps," and in 1896 was elected to the Academy.

Dedicated to
Georges Brandes

PUTOIS

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

THIS garden of our childhood, said Monsieur Bergeret, this garden that one could pace off in twenty steps, was for us a whole world, full of smiles and surprises.

"Lucien, do you recall Putois?" asked Zoe, smiling as usual, the lips pressed, bending over her work.

"Do I recall Putois! Of all the faces I saw as a child that of Putois remains the clearest in my remembrance. All the features of his face and his character are fixed in my mind. He had a pointed cranium . . ."

"A low forehead," added Mademoiselle Zoe.

And the brother and sister recited alternately, in a monotonous voice, with an odd gravity, the points in a sort of description:

"A low forehead."

"Squinting eyes."

"A shifty glance."

"Crow's-feet at the temples."

"The cheek-bones sharp, red and shining."

"His ears had no rims to them."

"The features were devoid of all expression."

"His hands, which were never still, alone expressed his meaning."

Translated by William Patten. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

"Thin, somewhat bent, feeble in appearance . . ."

"In reality he was unusually strong."

"He easily bent a five-franc piece between the first finger and the thumb . . ."

"Which was enormous."

"His voice was drawling . . ."

"And his speech mild."

Suddenly Monsieur Bergeret exclaimed: "Zoe! we have forgotten 'Yellow hair and sparse beard.' Let us begin all over again."

Pauline, who had listened with astonishment to this strange recital, asked her father and aunt how they had been able to learn by heart this bit of prose, and why they recited it as if it were a litany.

Monsieur Bergeret gravely answered:

"Pauline, what you have heard is a text, I may say a liturgy, used by the Bergeret family. It should be handed down to you so that it may not perish with your aunt and me. Your grandfather, my daughter, your grandfather, Eloi Bergeret, who was not amused with trifles, thought highly of this bit, principally because of its origin. He called it 'The Anatomy of Putois.' And he used to say that he preferred, in certain respects, the anatomy of Putois to the anatomy of Quaresme-prenant. 'If the description by Xenomanes,' he said, 'is more learned and richer in unusual and choice expressions, the description of Putois greatly surpasses it in clarity and simplicity of style.' He held this opinion because Doctor Ledouble, of Tours, had not yet explained chapters thirty, thirty-one, and thirty-two of the fourth book of Rabelais."

"I do not understand at all," said Pauline.

"That is because you did not know Putois, my daughter. You must understand that Putois was the most familiar figure in my childhood and in that of your 'Aunt Zoe. In the house of your grandfather Bergeret we constantly spoke of Putois. Each believed that he had seen him."

Pauline asked:

"Who was this Putois?"

Instead of replying, Monsieur Bergeret commenced to laugh, and Mademoiselle Bergeret also laughed, her lips pressed tight together. Pauline looked from one to the other. She thought it strange that her aunt should laugh so heartily, and more strange that she should laugh with and in sympathy with her brother. It was indeed singular, as the brother and sister were quite different in character.

"Papa, tell me what was Putois? Since you wish me to know, tell me."

"Putois, my daughter, was a gardener. The son of honest market-gardeners, he set up for himself as nurseryman at Saint-Omer. But he did not satisfy his customers and got in a bad way. Having given up business, he went out by the day. Those who employed him could not always congratulate themselves."

At this, Mademoiselle Bergeret, laughing, rejoined:

"Do you recall, Lucien, when our father could not find his ink, his pens, his sealing-wax, his scissors, he said: 'I suspect Putois has been here'?"

"Ah!" said Monsieur Bergeret, "Putois had not a good reputation."

"Is that all?" asked Pauline.

"No, my daughter, it is not all. Putois was remarkable in this, that while we knew him and were familiar with him, nevertheless—"

"—He did not exist," said Zoe.

Monsieur Bergeret looked at his sister with an air of reproach.

"What a speech, Zoe! and why break the charm like that? Do you dare say it, Zoe? Zoe, can you prove it? To maintain that Putois did not exist, that Putois never was, have you sufficiently considered the conditions of existence and the modes of being? Putois existed, my sister. But it is true that his was a peculiar existence."

"I understand less and less," said Pauline, discouraged.

"The truth will be clear to you presently, my daughter. Know then that Putois was born fully grown. I was still a child and your aunt was a little girl. We lived in a little house, in a suburb of Saint-Omer. Our parents led a peaceful, retired life, until they were discovered by an old lady named Madame Cornouiller, who lived at the manor of Montplaisir, twelve miles from town, and proved to be a great-aunt of my mother's. By right of relationship she insisted that our father and mother come to dine every Sunday at Montplaisir, where they were excessively bored. She said that it was the proper thing to have a family dinner on Sunday and that only people of common origin failed to observe this ancient custom. My father was bored to the point of tears at Montplaisir.

His desperation was painful to contemplate. But Madame Cornouiller did not notice it. She saw nothing. My mother was braver. She suffered as much as my father, and perhaps more, but she smiled."

"Women are made to suffer," said Zoe.

"Zoe, every living thing is destined to suffer. In vain our parents refused these fatal invitations. Madame Cornouiller came to take them each Sunday afternoon. They had to go to Montplaisir; it was an obligation from which there was absolutely no escape. It was an established order that only a revolt could break. My father finally revolted and swore not to accept another invitation from Madame Cornouiller, leaving it to my mother to find decent pretexts and varied reasons for these refusals, for which she was the least capable. Our mother did not know how to pretend."

"Say, Lucien, that she did not like to. She could tell a fib as well as any one."

"It is true that when she had good reasons she gave them rather than invent poor ones. Do you recall, my sister, that one day she said at table: 'Fortunately, Zoe has the whooping-cough; we shall not have to go to Montplaisir for some time'?"

"That was true!" said Zoe.

"You got over it, Zoe. And one day Madame Cornouiller said to my mother: 'Dearest, I count on your coming with your husband to dine Sunday at Montplaisir.' Our mother, expressly bidden by her husband to give Madame Cornouiller a good reason for declining, invented, in this extremity, a reason that

was not the truth. 'I am extremely sorry, dear Madame, but that will be impossible for us. Sunday I expect the gardener.'

"On hearing this, Madame Cornouiller looked through the glass door of the salon at the little wild garden, where the prickwood and the lilies looked as though they had never known the pruning-knife and were likely never to know it. 'You expect the gardener! What for?'

" 'To work in the garden.'

And my mother, having involuntarily turned her eyes on this little square of weeds and plants run wild, that she had called a garden, recognized with dismay the improbability of her excuse.

" 'This man,' said Madame Cornouiller, 'could just as well work in your garden Monday or Tuesday. Moreover, that will be much better. One should not work on Sunday.'

" 'He works all the week.'

"I have often noticed that the most absurd and ridiculous reasons are the least disputed: they disconcert the adversary. Madame Cornouiller insisted, less than one might expect of a person so little disposed to give up. Rising from her armchair, she asked:

" 'What do you call your gardener, dearest?'

" 'Putois,' answered my mother without hesitation.

"Putois was named. From that time he existed. Madame Cornouiller took herself off, murmuring: 'Putois! It seems to me that I know that name. Putois! Putois! I must know him. But I do not recollect him. Where does he live?'

" 'He works by the day. When one wants him one leaves word with this one or that one.'

" 'Ah! I thought so, a loafer and a vagabond—a good-for-nothing. Don't trust him, dearest.'

"From that time Putois had a character."

II

Messieurs Goubin and Jean Marteau having arrived, Monsieur Bergeret put them in touch with the conversation.

"We were speaking of him whom my mother caused to be born gardener at Saint-Omer and whom she christened. He existed from that time on."

"Dear master, will you kindly repeat that?" said Monsieur Goubin, wiping the glass of his monocle.

"Willingly," replied Monsieur Bergeret. "There was no gardener. The gardener did not exist. My mother said: 'I am waiting for the gardener.' At once the gardener was. He lived."

"Dear master," said Monsieur Goubin, "how could he live since he did not exist?"

"He had a sort of existence," replied Monsieur Bergeret.

"You mean an imaginary existence," Monsieur Goubin replied, disdainfully.

"Is it nothing then, but an imaginary existence?" exclaimed the master. "And have not mythical beings the power to influence men? Consider mythology, Monsieur Goubin, and you will perceive that they are not real beings but imaginary beings that exercise the

most profound and lasting influence on the mind. Everywhere and always, beings who have no more reality than Putois have inspired nations with hatred and love, terror and hope, have advised crimes, received offerings, made laws and customs. Monsieur Goubin, think of the eternal mythology. Putois is a mythical personage, the most obscure, I grant you, and of the lowest order. The coarse satyr, who in olden times sat at the table with our peasants in the North, was considered worthy of appearing in a picture by Jordaens and a fable by La Fontaine. The hairy son of Sycorax appeared in the noble world of Shakespeare. Putois, less fortunate, will be always neglected by artists and poets. He lacks bigness and the unusual style and character. He was conceived by minds too reasonable, among people who knew how to read and write, and who had not that delightful imagination in which fables take root. I think, Messieurs, that I have said enough to show you the real nature of Putois."

"I understand it," said Monsieur Goubin.

And Monsieur Bergeret continued his discourse.

"Putois was. I can affirm it. He was. Consider it, gentlemen, and you will admit that a state of being by no means implies substance, and means only the bonds attributed to the subject, expresses only a relation."

"Undoubtedly," said Jean Marteau; "but a being without attributes is a being less than nothing. I do not remember who at one time said, 'I am that I am.' Pardon my lapse of memory. One can not remember everything. But the unknown who spoke in that



Anatole France

Anatole France

fashion was very imprudent. In letting it be understood by this thoughtless observation that he was deprived of attributes and denied all relations, he proclaimed that he did not exist and thoughtlessly suppressed himself. I wager that no one has heard of him since."—"You have lost," answered Monsieur Bergeret. "He corrected the bad effect of these egotistical expressions by employing quantities of adjectives, and he is often spoken of, most often without judgment."—"I do not understand," said Monsieur Goubin.—"It is not necessary to understand," replied Jean Marteau. And he begged Monsieur Bergeret to speak of Putois. —"It is very kind of you to ask me," said the master.—"Putois was born in the second half of the nineteenth century, at Saint-Omer. He would have been better off if he had been born some centuries before in the forest of Arden or in the forest of Brocéliande. He would then have been a remarkably clever evil spirit."—"A cup of tea, Monsieur Goubin," said Pauline.—"Was Putois, then, an evil spirit?" said Jean Marteau.—"He was evil," replied Monsieur Bergeret; "he was, in a way, but not absolutely. It was true of him as with those devils that are called wicked, but in whom one discovers good qualities when one associates with them. And I am disposed to think that injustice has been done Putois. Madame Cornouiller, who, warned against him, had at once suspected him of being a loafer, a drunkard, and a robber, reflected that since my mother, who was not rich, employed him, it was because he was satisfied with little, and asked herself if she would not do well to have him work instead

of her gardener, who had a better reputation, but expected more. The time had come for trimming the yews. She thought that if Madame Eloi Bergeret, who was poor, did not pay Putois much, she herself, who was rich, would give him still less, for it is customary for the rich to pay less than the poor. And she already saw her yews trimmed in straight hedges, in balls and in pyramids, without her having to pay much. 'I will keep an eye open,' she said, 'to see that Putois does not loaf or rob me. I risk nothing, and it will be all profit. These vagabonds sometimes do better work than honest laborers.' She resolved to make a trial, and said to my mother: 'Dearest, send me Putois. I will set him to work at Montplaisir.' My mother would have done so willingly. But really it was impossible. Madame Cornouiller waited for Putois at Montplaisir, and waited in vain. She followed up her ideas and did not abandon her plans. When she saw my mother again, she complained of not having any news of Putois. 'Dearest, didn't you tell him that I was expecting him?'—'Yes! but he is strange, odd.'—'Oh, I know that kind. I know your Putois by heart. But there is no workman so crazy as to refuse to come to work at Montplaisir. My house is known, I think. Putois must obey my orders, and quickly, dearest. It will be sufficient to tell me where he lives; I will go and find him myself.' My mother answered that she did not know where Putois lived, that no one knew his house, that he was without hearth or home. 'I have not seen him again, Madame. I believe he is hiding.' What better could she say? Madame Cornouiller

heard her distrustfully; she suspected her of misleading, of removing Putois from inquiry, for fear of losing him or making him ask more. And she thought her too selfish. Many judgments accepted by the world that history has sanctioned are as well founded as that."—"That is true," said Pauline.—"What is true?" asked Zoe, half asleep.—"That the judgments of history are often false. I remember, papa, that you said one day: 'Madame Roland was very ingenuous to appeal to the impartiality of posterity, and not perceive that, if her contemporaries were ill-natured monkeys, their posterity would be also composed of ill-natured monkeys.' "—"Pauline," said Mademoiselle Zoe severely, "what connection is there between the story of Putois and this that you are telling us?"—"A very great one, my aunt."—"I do not grasp it."—Monsieur Bergeret, who was not opposed to digressions, answered his daughter: "If all injustices were finally redressed in the world, one would never have imagined another for these adjustments. How do you expect posterity to pass righteous judgment on the dead? How question them in the shades to which they have taken flight? As soon as we are able to be just to them we forget them. But can one ever be just? And what is justice? Madame Cornouiller, at least, was finally obliged to recognize that my mother had not deceived her and that Putois was not to be found. However, she did not give up trying to find him. She asked all her relatives, friends, neighbors, servants, and tradesmen if they knew Putois. Only two or three answered that they had never heard of him. For

the most part they believed they had seen him. 'I have heard that name,' said the cook, 'but I can not recall his face.'—'Putois! I must know him,' said the street-sweeper, scratching his ear. 'But I can not tell you who it is.' The most precise description came from Monsieur Blaise, receiver of taxes, who said that he had employed Putois to cut wood in his yard, from the 19th to the 23d of October, the year of the comet. One morning, Madame Cornouiller, out of breath, dropped into my father's office. 'I have seen Putois. Ah! I have seen him.'—'You believe it?'—'I am sure. He was passing close by Monsieur Tenchant's wall. Then he turned into the Rue des Abbesses, walking quickly. I lost him.'—'Was it really he?'—'Without a doubt. A man of fifty, thin, bent, the air of a vagabond, a dirty blouse.'—'It is true,' said my father, 'that this description could apply to Putois.'—'You see! Besides, I called him. I cried: "Putois!" and he turned around.'—'That is the method,' said my father, 'that they employ to assure themselves of the identity of evil-doers that they are hunting for.'—'I told you that it was he! I know how to find him, your Putois. Very well! He has a bad face. You had been very careless, you and your wife, to employ him. I understand physiognomy, and though I only saw his back, I could swear that he is a robber, and perhaps an assassin. The rims of his ears are flat, and that is a sign that never fails.'—'Ah! you noticed that the rims of his ears were flat?'—'Nothing escapes me. My dear Monsieur Bergeret, if you do not wish to be assassinated with your wife and your children, do not let

Putois come into your house again. Take my advice: have all your locks changed.'—Well, a few days afterward, it happened that Madame Cornouiller had three melons stolen from her vegetable garden. The robber not having been found, she suspected Putois. The gendarmes were called to Montplaisir, and their report confirmed the suspicions of Madame Cornouiller. Bands of marauders were ravaging the gardens of the countryside. But this time the robbery seemed to have been committed by one man, and with singular dexterity. No trace of anything broken, no footprints in the damp earth. The robber could be no one but Putois. That was the opinion of the corporal, who knew all about Putois, and had tried hard to put his hand on that bird. The 'Journal of Saint-Omer' devoted an article to the three melons of Madame Cornouiller, and published a portrait of Putois from descriptions furnished by the town. 'He has,' said the paper, 'a low forehead, squinting eyes, a shifty glance, crow's-feet, sharp cheek-bones, red and shining. No rims to the ears. Thin, somewhat bent, feeble in appearance, in reality he is unusually strong. He easily bends a five-franc piece between the first finger and the thumb.' There were good reasons for attributing to him a long series of robberies committed with surprising dexterity. The whole town was talking of Putois. One day it was learned that he had been arrested and locked up in prison. But it was soon recognized that the man that had been taken for him was an almanac seller named Rigobert. As no charge could be brought against him, he was discharged after four-

teen months of detention on suspicion. And Putois remained undiscoverable. Madame Cornouiller was the victim of another robbery, more audacious than the first. Three small silver spoons were taken from her sideboard. She recognized in this the hand of Putois, had a chain put on the door of her bedroom, and was unable to sleep." . . .

About ten o'clock in the evening, Pauline having gone to her room, Mademoiselle Bergeret said to her brother: "Do not forget to relate how Putois betrayed Madame Cornouiller's cook."—"I was thinking of it, my sister," answered Monsieur Bergeret. "To omit it would be to lose the best of the story. But everything must be done in order. Putois was carefully searched for by the police, who could not find him. When it was known that he could not be found, each one considered it his duty to find him; the shrewd ones succeeded. And as there were many shrewd ones at Saint-Omer and in the suburbs, Putois was seen simultaneously in the streets, in the fields, and in the woods. Another trait was thus added to his character. He was accorded the gift of ubiquity, the attribute of many popular heroes. A being capable of leaping long distances in a moment, and suddenly showing himself at the place where he was least expected, was honestly frightening. Putois was the terror of Saint-Omer. Madame Cornouiller, convinced that Putois had stolen from her three melons and three little spoons, lived in a state of fear, barricaded at Montplaisir. Bolts, bars, and locks did not reassure her. Putois was for her a frightfully subtle being who

could pass through doors. Trouble with her servants redoubled her fear. Her cook having been betrayed, the time came when she could no longer hide her misfortune. But she obstinately refused to name her betrayer."—"Her name was Gudule," said Mademoiselle Zoe.—"Her name was Gudule, and she believed that she was protected from danger by a long, forked beard that she wore on her chin. The sudden appearance of a beard protected the innocence of that holy daughter of the king that Prague venerates. A beard, no longer youthful, did not suffice to protect the virtue of Gudule. Madame Cornouiller urged Gudule to tell her the man. Gudule burst into tears, but kept silent. Prayers and menaces had no effect. Madame Cornouiller made a long and circumstantial inquiry. She adroitly questioned her neighbors and tradespeople, the gardener, the street-sweeper, the gendarmes; nothing put her on the track of the culprit. She tried again to obtain from Gudule a complete confession. 'In your own interest, Gudule, tell me who it is.' Gudule remained mute. All at once a ray of light flashed through the mind of Madame Cornouiller: 'It is Putois!' The cook cried, but did not answer. 'It is Putois! Why did I not guess it sooner? It is Putois! Miserable! miserable! miserable!' and Madame Cornouiller remained convinced that it was Putois. Everybody at Saint-Omer, from the judge to the lamplighter's dog, knew Gudule and her basket. At the news that Putois had betrayed Gudule, the town was filled with surprise, wonder, and merriment. . . . With this reputation in the town and its environs he re-

mained attached to our house by a thousand subtle ties. He passed before our door, and it was believed that he sometimes climbed the wall of our garden. He was never seen face to face. At any moment we would recognize his shadow, his voice, his footsteps. More than once we thought we saw his back in the twilight, at the corner of a road. To my sister and me he gradually changed in character. He remained mischievous and malevolent, but he became childlike and very ingenuous. He became less real and, I dare say, more poetical. He entered in the artless cycle of childish traditions. He became more like Croquemitaine,[1] like Père Fouettard, or the sand man who closes the children's eyes when evening comes. It was not that imp that tangled the colts' tails at night in the stable. Less rustic and less charming, but equally and frankly roguish, he made ink mustaches on my sister's dolls. In our bed, before going to sleep, we listened; he cried on the roofs with the cats, he howled with the dogs, he filled the mill hopper with groans, and imitated the songs of belated drunkards in the streets. What made Putois ever-present and familiar to us, what interested us in him, was that the remembrance of him was associated with all the objects about us. Zoe's dolls, my school books, in which he had many times rumpled and besmeared the pages; the garden wall, over which we had seen his red eyes gleam in the shadow; the blue porcelain jar that he cracked one winter's night, unless it was the frost; the trees, the streets, the benches—everything recalled Putois, the

[1] The national "bugaboo" or "bogy man."

children's Putois, a local and mythical being. He did not equal in grace and poetry the dullest satyr, the stoutest fawn of Sicily or Thessaly. But he was still a demigod. He had quite a different character for our father; he was symbolical and philosophical. Our father had great compassion for men. He did not think them altogether rational; their mistakes, when they were not cruel, amused him and made him smile. The belief in Putois interested him as an epitome and a summary of all human beliefs. As he was ironical and a joker, he spoke of Putois as if he were a real being. He spoke with so much insistence sometimes, and detailed the circumstances with such exactness, that my mother was quite surprised and said to him in her open-hearted way: 'One would say that you spoke seriously, my friend: you know well, however . . .' He replied gravely: 'All Saint-Omer believes in the existence of Putois. Would I be a good citizen if I deny him? One should look twice before setting aside an article of common faith.' Only a perfectly honest soul has such scruples. At heart my father was a Gassendiste.[2] He keyed his own particular sentiment with the public sentiment, believing, like the countryside, in the existence of Putois, but not admitting his direct responsibility for the theft of the melons and the betrayal of the cook. Finally, he professed faith in the existence of a Putois, to be a good citizen; and he eliminated Putois in his explanations of the events that took place in the town. By doing so in this instance, as in all others, he was an honorable and a sensible man.

[2] A follower of Gassendi (d. 1655), an exponent of Epicurus.

"As for our mother, she reproached herself somewhat for the birth of Putois, and not without reason. Because, after all, Putois was the child of our mother's invention, as Caliban was the poet's invention. Without doubt the faults were not equal, and my mother was more innocent than Shakespeare. However, she was frightened and confused to see her little falsehood grow inordinately, and her slight imposture achieve such a prodigious success, that, without stopping, extended all over town and threatened to extend over the world. One day she even turned pale, believing that she would see her falsehood rise up before her. That day, a servant she had, new to the house and the town, came to say to her that a man wished to see her. He wished to speak to Madame. 'What man is it?'—'A man in a blouse. He looks like a laborer.'—'Did he give his name?'—'Yes, Madame.'—'Well! what is his name?'—'Putois.'—'He told you that was his name?'—'Putois, yes, Madame.'—'He is here?'—'Yes, Madame. He is waiting in the kitchen.'—'You saw him?'—'Yes, Madame.'—'What does he want?'—'He did not say. He will only tell Madame.'—'Go ask him.'

"When the servant returned to the kitchen Putois was gone. This meeting of the new servant with Putois was never cleared up. But from that day I think my mother commenced to believe that Putois might well exist and that she had not told a falsehood after all."

SAC–AU–DOS

BY JORIS KARL HUYSMANS



Sac-au-dos means, literally, "pack-a-back." The "Athenæum" calls the story "a masterpiece of concentrated observation and description." It was first published, with stories by Zola, De Maupassant, and two others, in a collection called "Soirées de Médan." Huysmans, with his minute painting of detail, reminds us of his Dutch ancestry of artists. His art criticisms have marked him the most vigorous and intelligent champion of the impressionists, Moreau, Pissaro, Monet, and Whistler.

He was born at Paris in 1848. After 1892, when he retired to the Trappe de Notre Dame d'Igny, Huysmans showed an altogether new side to his genius. His conversion to Roman Catholicism became complete, and his writings show a more sincere interest in religious matters.

SAC-AU-DOS

BY JORIS KARL HUYSMANS

AS soon as I had finished my studies my parents deemed it useful to my career to cause me to appear before a table covered with green cloth and surmounted by the living busts of some old gentlemen who interested themselves in knowing whether I had learned enough of the dead languages to entitle me to the degree of Bachelor.

The test was satisfactory. A dinner to which all my relations, far and near, were invited celebrated my success, affected my future, and ultimately fixed me in the law. Well I passed my examination and got rid of the money provided for my first year's expenses with a blonde girl who, at times, pretended to be fond of me.

I frequented the Latin Quarter assiduously and there I learned many things; among others to take an interest in those students who blew their political opinions into the foam of their beer, every night, then to acquire a taste for the works of George Sand and of Heine, of Edgard Quinet, and of Henri Mürger.

The psychophysical moment of silliness was upon me.

That lasted about a year; gradually I ripened. The

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electoral struggles of the closing days of the Empire left me cold; I was the son neither of a Senator nor a proscript and I had but to outlive, no matter what the régime, the traditions of mediocrity and wretchedness long since adopted by my family. The law pleased me but little. I thought that the *Code* had been purposely maldirected in order to furnish certain people with an opportunity to wrangle, to the utmost limit, over the smallest words; even to-day it seems to me that a phrase clearly worded can not reasonably bear such diverse interpretation.

I was sounding my depths, searching for some state of being that I might embrace without too much disgust, when the late Emperor found one for me; he made me a soldier through the maladroitness of his policy.

The war with Prussia broke out. To tell the truth I did not understand the motives that made that butchery of armies necessary. I felt neither the need of killing others nor of being killed by them. However that may be, enrolled in the *Garde mobile* of the Seine, I received orders, after having gone in search of an outfit, to visit the barber and to be at the barracks in the Rue Lourcine at seven o'clock in the evening.

I was at the place punctually. After roll-call part of the regiment swarmed out of the barrack gates and emptied into the street. Then the sidewalks raised a shout and the gutters ran.

Crowding one against another, workmen in blouses, workmen in tatters, soldiers strapped and gaitered,

without arms, they scanned to the clink of glasses the Marseillaise over which they shouted themselves hoarse with their voices out of time. Heads geared with képis[1] of incredible height and ornamented with vizors fit for blind men and with tin cockades of red, white and blue, muffled in blue-black jackets with madder-red collars and cuffs, breached in blue linen pantaloons with a red stripe down the side, the militia of the Seine kept howling at the moon before going forth to conquer Prussia. That was a deafening uproar at the wine shops, a hubbub of glasses, cans and shrieks, cut into here and there by the rattling of a window shaken by the wind. Suddenly the roll of the drum muffled all that clamor; a new column poured out of the barracks; there was carousing and tippling indescribable. Those soldiers who were drinking in the wine shops shot now out into the streets, followed by their parents and friends who disputed the honor of carrying their knapsacks; the ranks were broken, it was a confusion of soldiers and citizens; mothers wept, fathers, more contained, sputtered wine, children frisked for joy and shrieked patriotic songs at the top of their shrill voices.

They crossed Paris helter-skelter by the flashes of lightning that whipped the storming clouds into white zigzags. The heat was overpowering, the knapsack was heavy; they drank at every corner of the street; they arrived at last at the railway station of Aubervilliers. There was a moment of silence broken by the sound of sobbing, dominated again by a burst of

[1]Military hats

the Marseillaise, then they stalled us like cattle in the cars. "Good night, Jules! may we meet soon again! Be good! Above all write to me!" They squeezed hands for a last time, the train whistled, we had left the station. We were a regular shovelful of fifty men in that box that rolled away with us. Some were weeping freely, jeered at by the others who, completely lost in drink were sticking lighted candles into their provisions and bawling at the top of their voices: "Down with Badinguet! and long live Rochefort!" [2] Others, in a corner by themselves, stared silently and sullenly at the broad floor that kept vibrating in the dust. All at once the convoy makes a halt—I got out. Complete darkness—twenty-five minutes after midnight.

On all sides stretch the fields, and in the distance, lighted up by sharp flashes of lightning, a cottage, a tree sketch their silhouette against a sky swollen by the tempest. Only the grinding and rumbling of the engine is heard, whose clusters of sparks flying from the smokestack scatter like a bouquet of fireworks the whole length of the train. Every one gets out, goes forward as far as the engine, which looms up in the night and becomes huge. The stop lasted quite two hours. The signal disks flamed red, the engineer was waiting for them to reverse. They turn; again we get back into the wagons, but a man who comes up on the run and swinging a lantern, speaks a few words to the conductor, who immediately backs the train

[2] Badinguet, nickname given to Napoleon III; Henri Rochefort, anti-Napoleon journalist and agitator.

into a siding where we remain motionless. Not one of us knows where we are. I descend again from the carriage, and sitting on an embankment, I nibble at a bit of bread and drink a drop or two, when the whirl of a hurricane whistles in the distance, approaches, roaring and vomiting fire, and an interminable train of artillery passed at full speed, carrying along horses, men, and cannon whose bronze necks sparkle in a confusion of light. Five minutes after we take up our slow advance, again interrupted by halts that grow longer and longer. The journey ends with daybreak, and leaning from the car window, worn out by the long watch of the night, I look out upon the country that surrounds us: a succession of chalky plains, closing in the horizon, a band of pale green like the color of a sick turquoise, a flat country, gloomy, meagre, the beggarly Champagne Pouilleuse!

Little by little the sun brightens, we, rumbling on the while, end, however, by getting there! Leaving at eight o'clock in the evening, we were delivered at three o'clock of the afternoon of the next day. Two of the militia had dropped by the way, one who had taken a header from the top of the car into the river, the other who had broken his head on the ledge of a bridge. The rest, after having pillaged the hovels and the gardens met along the route wherever the train stopped, either yawned, their lips puffed out with wine, and their eyes swollen, or amused themselves by throwing from one side of the carriage to the other branches of shrubs and hen-coops which they had stolen.

The disembarking was managed after the same fashion as the departure. Nothing was ready; neither canteen, nor straw, nor coats, nor arms, nothing, absolutely nothing. Only tents full of manure and of insects, just left by the troops off for the frontier. For three days we live at the mercy of Mourmelon.[3] Eating a sausage one day and drinking a bowl of café-au-lait the next, exploited to the utmost by the natives, sleeping, no matter how, without straw and without covering. Truly such a life was not calculated to give us a taste for the calling they had inflicted on us.

Once in camp, the companies separated; the laborers took themselves to the tents of their fellows; the bourgeois did the same. The tent in which I found myself was not badly managed, for we succeeded in driving out by argument of wine the two fellows, the native odor of whose feet was aggravated by a long and happy neglect.

One or two days passed. They made us mount guard with the pickets, we drank a great deal of eau-de-vie, and the drink-shops of Mourmelon were full without let, when suddenly Canrobert[4] passed us in review along the front line of battle. I see him now on his big horse, bent over the saddle, his hair flying, his waxed mustaches in a ghastly face. A mutiny was breaking out. Deprived of everything, and hardly convinced by that marshal that we lacked nothing, we growled in chorus when he talked of repressing our

[3] A suburb of Chalons.

[4] Canrobert, a brave and distinguished veteran, head of the Sixth Corps of the Army of the Rhine.

complaints by force: "Ran, plan, plan, a hundred thousand men afoot, to Paris, to Paris!"

Canrobert grew livid, and shouted, planting his horse in the midst of us. "Hats off to a marshal of France!" Again a howl goes up from the ranks; then turning bridle, followed in confusion by his staff officers, he threatened us with his finger, whistling between his separated teeth. "You shall pay dear for this, gentlemen from Paris!"

Two days after this episode, the icy water of the camp made me so sick that there was urgent need of my entering the hospital. After the doctor's visit, I buckle on my knapsack, and under guard of a corporal, here I am going limping along, dragging my legs and sweating under my harness. The hospital is gorged with men; they send me back. I then go to one of the nearest military hospitals; a bed stands empty; I am admitted. I put down my knapsack at last, and with the expectation that the major would forbid me to move, I went out for a walk in the little garden which connected the set of buildings. Suddenly there issued from a door a man with bristling beard and bulging eyes. He plants his hands in the pockets of a long dirt-brown cloak, and shouts out from the distance as soon as he sees me:

"Hey you, man! What are you doing over here?" I approach, I explain to him the motive that brings me. He thrashes his arms about and bawls:

"Go in again! You have no right to walk about in this garden until they give you your costume."

I go back into the room, a nurse arrives and brings

me a great military coat, pantaloons, old shoes without heels, and a cap like a nightcap. I look at myself, thus grotesquely dressed, in my little mirror. Good Heavens, what a face and what an outfit! With my haggard eyes and my sallow complexion, with my hair cut short, and my nose with the bumps shining; with my long mouse-gray coat, my pants stained russet, my great heelless shoes, my colossal cotton cap, I am prodigiously ugly. I could not keep from laughing. I turn my head toward the side of my bed neighbor, a tall boy of Jewish type, who is sketching my portrait in a notebook. We become friends at once; I tell him to call me Eugène Lejantel; he responds by telling me to call him Francis Emonot; we recall to each other this and that painter; we enter into a discussion of esthetics and forget our misfortunes. Night arrives; they portion out to us a dish of boiled meat dotted black with a few lentils, they pour us out brimming cups of coco-clairet, and I undress, enchanted at stretching myself out in a bed without keeping my clothes and my shoes on.

The next morning I am awakened at about six o'clock by a great fracas at the door and a clatter of voices. I sit up in bed, I rub my eyes, and I see the gentleman of the night before, still dressed in his wrapper, brown the color of cachou, who advances majestically, followed by a train of nurses. It was the major. Scarcely inside, he rolls his dull green eyes from right to left and from left to right, plunges his hands in his pockets and bawls:

"Number One, show your leg—your dirty leg. Eh, it's in a bad shape, that leg, that sore runs like a foun-

tain; lotion of bran and water, lint, half-rations, a strong licorice tea. Number Two, show your throat —your dirty throat. It's getting worse and worse, that throat; the tonsils will be cut out to-morrow."

"But, doctor—"

"Eh, I am not asking anything from you, am I? Say one word and I'll put you on a diet."

"But, at least—"

"Put that man on a diet. Write: diet, gargles, strong licorice tea."

In that vein he passed all the sick in review, prescribing for all, the syphilitics and the wounded, the fevered and the dysentery patients his strong licorice tea. He stopped in front of me, stared into my face, tore off my covering, punched my stomach with his fist, ordered albuminated water for me, the inevitable tea; and went out snorting and dragging his feet.

Life was difficult with the men who were about us. There were twenty-one in our sleeping quarters. At my left slept my friend, the painter; on my right, a great devil of a trumpeter, with face pocked like a sewing thimble and yellow as a glass of bile. He combined two professions, that of cobbler by day and a procurer of girls by night. He was, in other repects, a comical fellow who frisked about on his hands, or on his head, telling you in the most naïve way in the world the manner in which he expedited at the toe of his boot the work of his menials, or intoned in a touching voice sentimental songs:

"I have cherished in my sorrow—ow
But the friendship of a swallow—ow."

I conquered his good graces by giving him twenty sous to buy a liter of wine with, and we did well in not being on bad terms with him, for the rest of our quarters—composed in part of attorneys of the Rue Maubuée—were well disposed to pick a quarrel with us.

One night, among others, the 15th of August, Francis Emonot threatened to box the ears of two men who had taken his towel. There was a formidable hubbub in the dormitory. Insults rained, we were treated to "roule-en-coule et de duchesses." Being two against nineteen, we were in a fair way of getting a regular drubbing, when the bugler interfered, took aside the most desperate and coaxed them into giving up the stolen object. To celebrate the reconciliation which followed this scene, Francis and I contributed three francs each, and it was arranged that the bugler with the aid of his comrades should try to slip out of the hospital and bring back some meat and wine.

The light had disappeared from the major's window, the druggist at last extinguished his, we climb over the thicket, examine our surroundings, caution the men who are gliding along the walls, not to encounter the sentinels on the way, mount on one another's shoulders and jump off into the field. An hour later they came back laden with victuals; they pass them over and reenter the dormitory with us; we suppress the two night lamps, light candle-ends stuck on the floor, and around my bed in our shirts we form a circle. We had absorbed three or four liters of wine and cut up the best part of a leg of mutton, when a

great clattering of shoes is heard; I blow out the candle stubbs, by the grace of my shoe, and every one escapes under the beds. The door opens; the major appears, heaves a formidable "Good Heavens!" stumbles in the darkness, goes out and comes back with a lantern and the inevitable train of nurses. I profit by the moment to disperse the remains of the feast; the major crosses the dormitory at a quick step, swearing, threatening to take us all into custody and to put us in stocks.

We are convulsed with laughter under our coverings; a trumpet-flourish blazes from the other side of the dormitory. The major puts us all under diet; then he goes out, warning us that we shall know in a few minutes what metal he is made of.

Once gone, we vie with each other in doing our worst; flashes of laughter rumble and crackle. The trumpeter does a handspring in the dormitory, one of his friends joins him, a third jumps on his bed as on a springboard and bounces up and down, his arms balancing, his shirt flying; his neighbor breaks into a triumphant cancan; the major enters abruptly, orders four men of the line he has brought with him to seize the dancers, and announces to us that he is going to draw up a report and send it to whom it may concern.

Calm is restored at last; the next day we get the nurses to buy us some eatables. The days run on without further incident. We are beginning to perish of ennui in this hospital, when, one day, at five o'clock, the doctor bursts into the room and orders us to put on our campaign clothes and to buckle on our knapsacks.

We learn ten minutes later that the Prussians are marching on Chalons.

A gloomy amazement reigns in the quarters. Until now we have had no doubts as to the outcome of passing events. We knew about the too celebrated victory of Sarrebrück, we do not expect the reverses which overwhelm us. The major examines every man; not one is cured, all had been too long gorged with licorice water and deprived of care. Nevertheless, he returns to their corps the least sick, he orders others to lie down completely dressed, knapsack in readiness. Francis and I are among these last. The day passes, the night passes. Nothing. But I have the colic continually and suffer. At last, at about nine o'clock in the morning, appears a long train of mules with "cacolets," [5] and led by "tringlots." [6] We climb two by two into the baskets. Francis and I were lifted onto the same mule, only, as the painter was very fat and I very lean, the arrangement see-sawed; I go up in the air while he descends under the belly of the mule, who, dragged by the head, and pushed from behind, dances and flings about furiously. We trot along in a whirlwind of dust, blinded, bewildered, jolted, we cling to the bar of the cacolet, shut our eyes, laugh and groan. We arrive at Chalons more dead than alive; we fall to the gravel like jaded cattle, then they pack us into the cars and we leave Chalons to go—where? No one knows.

It is night; we fly over the rails. The sick are taken

[5] Panier seats used in the French army to transport the wounded.
[6] Tringlots are the soldiers detailed for this duty.

from the cars and walked up and down the platforms. The engine whistles, slows down and stops in a railway station—that of Reims, I suppose, but I can not be sure. We are dying of hunger, the commissary forgot but one thing: to give us bread for the journey. I get out. I see an open buffet. I run for it, but others are there before me. They are fighting as I come up. Some were seizing bottles, others meat, some bread, some cigars. Half-dazed but furious, the restaurant-keeper defends his shop at the point of a spit. Crowded by their comrades, who come up in gangs, the front row of militia throw themselves onto the counter, which gives way, carrying in its wake the owner of the buffet and his waiters. Then followed a regular pillage; everything went, from matches to toothpicks. Meanwhile the bell rings and the train starts. Not one of us disturbs himself, and while sitting on the walk, I explain to the painter how the tubes work, the mechanism of the bell. The train backs down over the rails to take us aboard. We ascend into our compartments again and we pass in review the booty we had seized. To tell the truth, there was little variety of food. Pork-butcher's meat and nothing but pork-butcher's meat! We had six strings of Bologna sausages flavored with garlic, a scarlet tongue, two sausages, a superb slice of Italian sausage, a slice in silver stripe, the meat all of an angry red, mottled white; four liters of wine, a half-bottle of cognac, and a few candle ends. We stick the candle ends into the neck of our flasks, which swing, hung by strings to the sides of the wagon. There was, thus, when the train

jolted over a switch, a rain of hot grease which congealed almost instantly into great platters, but our coats had seen many another.

We began our repast at once, interrupted by the going and coming of those of the militia who kept running along the footboards the whole length of the train, and knocked at our window-panes and demanded something to drink. We sang at the top of our voices, we drank, we clinked glasses. Never did sick men make so much noise or romp so on a train in motion! One would have said that it was a rolling Court of Miracles; the cripples jumped with jointed legs, those whose intestines were burning soaked them in bumpers of cognac, the one-eyed opened their eyes, the fevered capered about, the sick throats bellowed and tippled; it was unheard of!

This disturbance ends in calming itself. I profit by the lull to put my nose out of the window. There was not a star there, not even a tip of the moon, heaven and earth seem to make but one, and in that intensity of inky blackness, the lanterns winked like eyes of different colors attached to the metal of the disks. The engineer discharged his whistle, the engine puffed and vomited its sparks without rest. I reclose the window and look at my companions. Some were snoring, others disturbed by the jolting of the box, gurgled and swore in their sleep, turning over incessantly, searching for room to stretch their legs, to brace their heads that nodded at every jolt.

By dint of looking at them, I was beginning to get sleepy when the train stopped short and woke me up.

We were at a station; and the station-master's office flamed like a forge fire in the darkness of the night. I had one leg numbed, I was shivering with cold, I descend to warm up a bit. I walk up and down the platform, I go to look at the engine, which they uncouple, and which they replace by another, and walking by the office I hear the bills and the tic-tac of the telegraph. The employee, with back turned to me, was stooping a little to the right in such a way that from where I was placed, I could see but the back of his head and the tip of his nose, which shone red and beaded with sweat, while the rest of his figure disappeared in the shadow thrown by the screen of a gas-jet.

They invite me to get back into the carriage, and I find my comrades again, just as I had left them. That time I went to sleep for good. For how long did my sleep last? I don't know—when a great cry woke me up: "Paris! Paris!" I made a dash for the doorway. At a distance, against a band of pale gold, stood out in black the smokestacks of factories and workshops. We were at Saint-Denis; the news ran from car to car. Every one was on his feet. The engine quickened its pace. The Gare du Nord looms up in the distance. We arrive there, we get down, we throw ourselves at the gates. One part of us succeeds in escaping, the others are stopped by the employees of the railroad and by the troops; by force they make us remount into a train that is getting up steam, and here we are again, off for God knows where!

We roll onward again all day long. I am weary of looking at the rows of houses and trees that spin by

before my eyes; then, too, I have the colic continually and I suffer. About four o'clock of the afternoon, the engine slackens its speed, and stops at a landing-stage where awaits us there an old general, around whom sports a flock of young men, with headgear of red képis, breached in red and shod with boots with yellow spurs. The general passes us in review and divides us into two squads; the one for the seminary, the other is directed toward the hospital. We are, it seems, at Arras. Francis and we form part of the first squad. They tumble us into carts stuffed with straw, and we arrive in front of a great building that settles and seems about to collapse into the street. We mount to the second story to a room that contains some thirty beds; each one of us unbuckles his knapsack, combs himself, and sits down. A doctor arrives.

"What is the trouble with you?" he asks of the first.

"A carbuncle."

"Ah! and you?"

"Dysentery."

"Ah! and you?"

"A bubo."

"But in that case you have not been wounded during the war?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Very well! You can take up your knapsacks again. The archbishop gives up the beds of his seminarists only to the wounded."

I pack into my knapsack again all the knickknacks that I had taken out, and we are off again, willy-nilly, for the city hospital. There was no more room there.

In vain the sisters contrive to squeeze the iron beds together, the wards are full. Worn out by all these delays, I seize one mattress, Francis takes another, and we go and stretch ourselves in the garden on a great grass-plot.

The next day I have a talk with the director, an affable and charming man. I ask permission for the painter and for me to go out into the town. He consents; the door opens; we are free! We are going to dine at last! To eat real meat, to drink real wine! Ah, we do not hesitate; we make straight for the best hotel in town. They serve us there with a wholesome meal. There are flowers there on the table, magnificent bouquets of roses and fuchias that spread themselves out of the glass vases. The waiter brings in a roast that drains into a lake of butter; the sun himself comes to the feast, makes the covers sparkle and the blades of the knives, sifts his golden dust through the carafes, and playing with the pomard that gently rocks in the glasses, spots with a ruby star the damask cloth.

Oh, sacred joy of the guzzlers! My mouth is full and Francis is drunk! The fumes of the roast mingle with the perfume of the flowers; the purple of the wine vies in gorgeousness with the red of the roses. The waiter who serves us has the air of folly and we have the air of gluttons, it is all the same to us! We stuff down roast after roast, we pour down bordeaux upon burgundy, chartreuse upon cognac. To the devil with your weak wines and your thirty-sixes,[7] which we have been drinking since our departure from Paris! To the

[7] Brandy of thirty-six degrees.

devil with those whimsicalities without name, those mysterious pot-house poisons with which we have been so crammed to leanness for nearly a month! We are unrecognizable; our once peaked faces redden like a drunkard's, we get noisy, with noise in the air we cut loose. We run all over the town that way.

Evening arrives; we must go back, however. The sister who is in charge of the old men's ward says to us in a small flute-like voice:

"Soldiers, gentlemen, you were very cold last night, but you are going to have a good bed."

And she leads us into a great room where three night lamps, dimly lighted, hang from the ceiling. I have a white bed, I sink with delight between the sheets that still smell fresh with the odor of washing. We hear nothing but the breathing or the snoring of the sleepers. I am quite warm, my eyes close, I know no longer where I am, when a prolonged chuckling awakes me. I open one eye and I perceive at the foot of my bed an individual who is looking down at me. I sit up in bed. I see before me an old man, tall, lean, his eyes haggard, lips slobbering into a rough beard. I ask what he wants of me. No answer! I cry out: "Go away! Let me sleep!"

He shows me his fist. I suspect him to be a lunatic. I roll up my towel, at the end of which I quietly twist a knot; he advances one step; I leap to the floor; I parry the fisticuff he aims at me, and with the towel I deal him a return blow full in the left eye. He sees thirty candles, he throws himself at me; I draw back and let fly a vigorous kick in the stomach. He tum-

bles, carrying with him a chair that rebounds; the dormitory is awakened; Francis runs up in his shirt to lend me assistance; the sister arrives; the nurses dart upon the madman, whom they flog and succeed with great difficulty in putting in bed again. The aspect of the dormitory was eminently ludicrous; to the gloom of faded rose, which the dying night lamps had spread around them, succeeded the flaming of three lanterns. The black ceiling, with its rings of light that danced above the burning wicks, glittered now with its tints of freshly spread plaster. The sick men, a collection of Punch and Judies without age, had clutched the piece of wood that hung at the end of a cord above their beds, hung on to it with one hand, and with the other made gestures of terror. At that sight my anger cools, I split with laughter, the painter suffocates, it is only the sister who preserves her gravity and succeeds by force of threats and entreaties in restoring order in the room.

Night came to an end, for good or ill; in the morning at six o'clock the rattle of a drum assembled us, the director called off the roll. We start for Rouen. Arrived in that city, an officer tells the unfortunate man in charge of us that the hospital is full and can not take us in. Meanwhile we have an hour to wait. I throw my knapsack down into a corner of the station, and though my stomach is on fire, we are off, Francis and I, wandering at random, in ecstasies before the church of Saint-Ouen, in wonder before the old houses. We admire so much and so long that the hour had long since passed before we even thought of

looking for the station again. "It's a long time since your comrades departed," one of the employees of the railroad said to us; "they are in Evreux." The devil! The next train doesn't go until nine o'clock.—Come, let's get some dinner!"

When we arrived at Evreux, midnight had come. We could not present ourselves at a hospital at such an hour; we would have the appearance of malefactors. The night is superb, we cross the city and we find ourselves in the open fields. It was the time of haying, the piles were in stacks. We spy out a little stack in a field, we hollow out there two comfortable nests, and I do not know whether it is the reminiscent odor of our couch or the penetrating perfume of the woods that stirs us, but we feel the need of airing our defunct love affairs. The subject was inexhaustible. Little by little, however, words become fewer, enthusiasm dies out, we fall asleep. "Sacre bleu!" cries my neighbor, as he stretches himself. "What time can it be?" I awake in turn. The sun will not be late in rising, for the great blue curtain is laced at the horizon with a fringe of rose. What misery! It will be necessary now to go knock at the door of the hospital, to sleep in wards impregnated with that heavy smell through which returns, like an obstinate refrain, the acrid flower of powder of iodoform! All sadly we take our way to the hospital again. They open to us but alas! one only of us is admitted, Francis—and I, they send me on to the lyceum. This life is no longer possible, I meditate an escape, the house surgeon on duty comes down into the courtyard. I show him my

law-school diploma; he knows Paris, the Latin Quarter. I explain to him my situation. "It has come to an absolute necessity." I tell him "that either Francis comes to the lyceum or that I go to rejoin him at the hospital." He thinks it over, and in the evening, coming close to my bed, he slips these words into my ear: "Tell them to-morrow morning that your sufferings increase." The next day, in fact, at about seven o'clock, the doctor makes his appearance; a good, an excellent man, who had but two faults; that of odorous teeth and that of desiring to get rid of his patients at any cost. Every morning the following scene took place:

"Ah, ha! the fine fellow," he cries, "what an air he has! good color, no fever. Get up and go take a good cup of coffee; but no fooling, you know! don't go running after the girls; I will sign for you your *Exeat;* you will return to-morrow to your regiment."

Sick or not sick, he sent back three a day. That morning he stops in front of me and says:

"Ah! saperlotte, my boy, you look better!"

I exclaim that never have I suffered so much.

He sounds my stomach. "But you are better," he murmurs; "the stomach is not so hard." I protest—he seems astonished, the interne then says to him in an undertone:

"We ought perhaps to give him an injection; and we have here neither syringe nor stomach-pump; if we send him to the hospital—?"

"Come, now, that's an idea!" says the good man, delighted at getting rid of me, and then and there he

signs the order for my admission. Joyfully I buckle on my knapsack, and under guard of one of the servants of the lyceum I make my entrance at the hospital. I find Francis again! By incredible good luck the St. Vincent corridor, where he sleeps, in default of a room in the wards, contains one empty bed next to his. We are at last reunited! In addition to our two beds, five cots stretch, one after the other, along the yellow glazed walls. For occupants they have a soldier of the line, two artillerymen, a dragoon, and a hussar. The rest of the hospital is made up of certain old men, crack-brained and weak-bodied, some young men, rickety or bandy-legged, and a great number of soldiers—wrecks from MacMahon's army—who, after being floated on from one military hospital to another, had come to be stranded on this bank. Francis and I, we are the only ones who wear the uniform of the Seine militia; our bed neighbors were good enough fellows; one, to tell the truth, quite as insignificant as another; they were, for the most part, the sons of peasants or farmers called to serve under the flag after the declaration of war.

While I am taking off my vest, there comes a sister, so frail, so pretty that I can not keep from looking at her; the beautiful big eyes! the long blond lashes! the pretty teeth! She asks me why I have left the lyceum; I explain to her in roundabout phrases how the absence of a forcing pump caused me to be sent back from the college. She smiles gently and says to me: "Ah, sir soldier, you could have called the thing by its name; we are used to everything." I should

think she was used to everything, unfortunate woman, for the soldiers constrained themselves but little in delivering themselves of their indiscreet amenities before her. Yet never did I see her blush. She passed among them mute, her eyes lowered, seeming not to hear the coarse jokes retailed around her.

Heavens! how she spoiled me! I see her now in the morning, as the sun breaks on the stone floor the shadows of the window bars, approaching slowly from the far end of the corridor, the great wings of her bonnet flapping at her face. She comes close to my bed with a dish that smokes, and on the edge of which glistens her well-trimmed finger nail. "The soup is a little thin to-day," she says with her pretty smile, "so I bring you some chocolate. Eat it quick while it's hot!"

In spite of the care she lavished upon me, I was bored to death in that hospital. My friend and I, we had reached that degree of brutishness that throws you on your bed, trying to kill in animal drowsiness the long hours of insupportable days. The only distractions offered us consisted in a breakfast and a dinner composed of boiled beef, watermelon, prunes, and a finger of wine—the whole of not sufficient quantity to nourish a man.

Thanks to my ordinary politeness toward the sisters and to the prescription labels that I wrote for them, I obtained fortunately a cutlet now and then and a pear picked in the hospital orchard. I was, then, on the whole, the least to be pitied of all the soldiers packed together, pell-mell, in the wards, but during

the first days I could not succeed even in swallowing the meagre morning dole. It was inspection hour, and the doctor chose that moment to perform his operations. The second day after my arrival he ripped a thigh open from top to bottom; I heard a piercing cry; I closed my eyes, not enough, however, to avoid seeing a red stream spurt in great jets on to the doctor's apron. That morning I could eat no more. Little by little, however, I grew accustomed to it; soon I contented myself by merely turning my head away and keeping my soup.

In the mean while the situation became intolerable. We tried, but in vain, to procure newspapers and books; we were reduced to masquerading, to donning the hussar's vest for fun. This puerile fooling quickly wore itself out, and stretching ourselves every twenty minutes, exchanging a few words, we dive our heads into the bolsters.

There was not much conversation to be drawn from our comrades. The two artillerymen and the hussar were too sick to talk. The dragoon swore by the name of heaven, saying nothing, got up every instant, enveloped in his great white mantle, and went to the wash-bowls, whose sloppy condition he reported by means of his bare feet. There were some old saucepans lying about in which the convalescents pretended to cook, offering their stew in jest to the sisters.

There remained, then, only the soldier of the line: an unfortunate grocer's clerk, father of a child, called to the army, stricken constantly by fever, shivering under his bedclothes.

Squatting, tailor-fashion, on our bed, we listen to him recount the battle in which he was picked up. Cast out near Froeschwiller, on a plain surrounded with woods, he had seen the red flashes shoot by in bouquets of white smoke, and he had ducked, trembling, bewildered by the cannonading, wild with the whistling of the balls. He had marched, mixed in with the regiments, through the thick mud, not seeing a single Prussian, not knowing in what direction they were, hearing on all sides groans, cut by sharp cries, then the ranks of the soldiers placed in front of him, all at once turned, and in the confusion of flight he had been, without knowing how, thrown to the ground. He had picked himself up and had fled, abandoning his gun and knapsack, and at last, worn out by the forced marches endured for eight days, undermined by fear, weakened by hunger, he had rested himself in a trench. He had remained there dazed, inert, stunned by the roar of the bombs, resolved no longer to defend himself, to move no more; then he thought of his wife, and, weeping, demanded what he had done that they should make him suffer so; he picked up, without knowing why, the leaf of a tree, which he kept, and which he had about him now, for he showed it to us often, dried and shriveled at the bottom of his pockets.

An officer had passed meanwhile, revolver in hand, had called him "coward," and threatened to break his head if he did not march. He had replied: "That would please me above all things. Oh, that this would end!" But the officer at the very moment he was shaking him on to his feet was stretched out, the blood

bursting, spurting from his neck. Then fear took possession of him; he fled and succeeded in reaching a road far off, overrun with the flying, black with troops, furrowed by gun-carriages whose dying horses broke and crushed the ranks.

They succeeded at last in putting themselves under shelter. The cry of treason arose from the groups. Old soldiers seemed once more resolved, but the recruits refused to go on. "Let them go and be killed," they said, indicating the officers; "that's their profession. As for me I have children; it's not the State that will take care of them if I die!" And they envied the fate of those who were slightly wounded and the sick who were allowed to take refuge in the ambulances.

"Ah, how afraid one gets, and, then, how one holds in the ear the voices of men calling for their mothers and begging for something to drink," he added, shivering all over. He paused, and, looking about the corridor with an air of content, he continued: "It's all the same, I am very happy to be here; and then, as it is, my wife can write to me," and he drew from his trousers pocket some letters, saying with satisfaction: "The little one has written, look!" and he points out at the foot of the paper under his wife's labored handwriting, some up-and-down strokes forming a dictated sentence, where there were some "I kiss papas" in blots of ink.

We listened twenty times at least to that story, and we had to suffer during mortal hours the repetitions of that man, delighted at having a child. We ended

by stopping our ears and by trying to sleep so as not to hear him any more.

This deplorable life threatened to prolong itself, when one morning Francis, who, contrary to his habit, had been prowling around the whole of the evening before in the courtyard, says to me: "I say, Eugène, come out and breathe a little of the air of the fields." I prick my ears. "There is a field reserved for lunatics," he continued; "that field is empty; by climbing onto the roofs of the outhouses, and that is easy, thanks to the gratings that ornament the windows, we can reach the coping of the wall; we jump and we tumble into the country. Two steps from the wall is one of the gates of Evreux. What do you say?"

I say—I say that I am quite willing to go out, but how shall we get back?

"I do not know anything about that; first let us get out, we will plan afterward. Come, get up, they are going to serve the soup; we jump the wall after."

I get up. The hospital lacked water, so much so that I was reduced to washing in the seltzer water which the sister had had sent to me. I take my siphon, I mark the painter who cries fire, I press the trigger, the discharge hits him full in his face; then I place myself in front of him, I receive the stream in my beard, I rub my nose with the lather, I dry my face. We are ready, we go downstairs. The field is deserted; we scale the wall; Francis takes his measure and jumps. I am sitting astride the coping of the wall, I cast a rapid glance around me; below, a ditch and some grass, on the right one of the gates of the

town; in the distance, a forest that sways and shows its rents of golden red against a band of pale blue. I stand up; I hear a noise in the court; I jump; we skirt the walls; we are in Evreux!

Shall we eat? Motion adopted.

Making our way in search of a resting-place, we perceive two little women wagging along. We follow them and offer to breakfast with them; they refuse; we insist; they answer no less gently; we insist again; they say yes. We go home with them, with a meat-pie, bottles of wine, eggs, and a cold chicken. It seems odd to us to find ourselves in a light room, hung with paper, spotted with lilac blossoms and green leaves; there are at the casements damask curtains of red currant color, a mirror over the fireplace, an engraving representing a Christ tormented by the Pharisees. Six chairs of cherry wood and a round table with an oil-cloth showing the kings of France, a bedspread with eiderdown of pink muslin. We set the table, we look with greedy eye at the girls moving about. It takes a long time to get things ready, for we stop them for a kiss in passing; for the rest, they are ugly and stupid enough. But what is that to us? It's so long since we have scented the mouth of woman!

I carve the chicken; the corks fly, we drink like topers, we eat like ogres. The coffee steams in the cups; we gild it with cognac; my melancholy flies away, the punch kindles, the blue flames of the Kirsch-wasser leap in the salad bowl, the girls giggle, their hair in their eyes. Suddenly four strokes ring out slowly from the church tower. It is four o'clock.

And the hospital! Good heavens, we had forgotten it! I turn pale. Francis looks at me in fright, we tear ourselves from the arms of our hostesses, we go out at double quick.

"How to get in?" says the painter.

Alas! we have no choice; we shall get there scarcely in time for supper. Let's trust to the mercy of heaven and make for the great gate!

We get there; we ring; the sister concièrge is about to open the door for us and stands amazed. We salute her, and I say loud enough to be heard by her:

"I say, do you know, they are not very amiable at that commissariat; the fat one specially received us only more or less civilly."

The sister breathes not a word. We run at a gallop for the messroom; it was time, I heard the voice of Sister Angèle who was distributing the rations. I went to bed as quickly as possible, I covered with my hand a spot my beauty had given me the length of my neck; the sister looks at me, finds in my eyes an unwonted sparkle, and asks with interest: "Are your pains worse?"

I reassure her and reply: "On the contrary, sister, I am better; but this idleness and this imprisonment are killing me."

When I speak of the appalling ennui that is trying me, sunk in this company, in the midst of the country, far from my own people, she does not reply, but her lips close tight, her eyes take on an indefinable expression of melancholy and of pity. One day she said to me in a dry tone: "Oh, liberty's worth nothing to

you," alluding to a conversation she had overheard between Francis and me, discussing the charming allurements of Parisian women; then she softened and added with her fascinating little moue: "You are really not serious, Mr. Soldier."

The next morning we agreed, the painter and I, that as soon as the soup was swallowed, we would scale the wall again. At the time appointed we prowl about the field; the door is closed. "Bast, worse luck!" says Francis, *"En avant!"* and he turns toward the great door of the hospital. I follow him. The sister in charge asks where we are going. "To the commissariat." The door opens, we are outside.

Arrived at the grand square of the town, in front of the church, I perceive, as we contemplate the sculptures of the porch, a stout gentleman with a face like a red moon bristling with white mustaches, who stares at us in astonishment. We stare back at him, boldly, and continue on our way. Francis is dying of thirst; we enter a café, and, while sipping my demi-tasse, I cast my eyes over the local paper, and I find there a name that sets me dreaming. I did not know, to tell the truth, the person who bore it, but that name recalled to me memories long since effaced. I remembered that one of my friends had a relation in a very high position in the town of Evreux. "It is absolutely necessary for me to see him," I say to the painter; I ask his address of the café-keeper; he does not know it; I go out and visit all the bakers and the druggists that I meet with. Every one eats bread and takes medicine; it is impossible that one of those manufac-

turers should not know the address of Monsieur de Fréchêdé. I did find it there, in fact; I dust off my blouse, I buy a black cravat, gloves, and I go and ring gently, in the Rue Chatrain, at the iron grating of a private residence which rears its brick façade and slate roofs in the clearing of a sunny park. A servant lets me in. Monsieur de Fréchêdé is absent, but Madame is at home. I wait for a few seconds in a salon; the portière is raised and an old lady appears. She has an air so affable that I am reassured. I explain to her in a few words who I am.

"Sir," she says with a kind smile, "I have often heard speak of your family. I think, even, that I have met at Madame Lezant's, madame, your mother, during my last journey to Paris; you are welcome here."

We talked a long time; I, somewhat embarrassed, covering with my képi the spot on my neck; she trying to persuade me to accept some money, which I refuse.

She says to me at last: "I desire with all my heart to be useful to you. What can I do?" I reply: "Heavens, Madame, if you could get them to send me back to Paris, you would render me a great service; communications will be interrupted very soon, if the newspapers are to be believed; they talk of another *coup d'état*, or the overthrow of the Empire; I have great need of seeing my mother again; and especially of not letting myself be taken prisoner here if the Prussians come."

In the mean while Monsieur de Fréchêdé enters. In two words he is made acquainted with the situation.

"If you wish to come with me to the doctor of the hospital," he says, "you have no time to lose."

To the doctor! Good heavens! and how account to him for my absence from the hospital? I dare not breathe a word; I follow my protector, asking myself how it will all end. We arrive; the doctor looks at me with a stupefied air. I do not give him time to open his mouth, and I deliver with prodigious volubility a string of jeremiads over my sad position.

Monsieur de Fréchêdé in his turn takes up the argument, and asks him, in my favor, to give me a convalescent's leave of absence for two months.

"Monsieur is, in fact, sick enough," says the doctor, to be entitled to two months' rest; if my colleagues and if the General look at it as I do your protégé will be able in a few days to return to Paris."

"That's good," replies Monsieur de Fréchêdé. "I thank you, doctor; I will speak to the General myself to-night."

We are in the street; I heave a great sigh of relief; I press the hand of that excellent man who shows so kindly an interest in me. I run to find Francis again. We have but just time to get back; we arrive at the gate of the hospital; Francis rings; I salute the sister. She stops me: "Did you not tell me this morning that you were going to the commissariat?"

"Quite right, sister."

"Very well! the General has just left here. Go and see the director and Sister Angèle; they are waiting for you; you will explain to them, no doubt, the object of your visits to the commissariat."

We remount, all crestfallen, the dormitory stairs. Sister Angèle is there, who waits for us, and who says:

"Never could I have believed such a thing! You have been all over the city, yesterday and to-day, and Heaven knows what kind of life you have been leading!"

"Oh, really!" I exclaim.

She looked at me so fixedly that I breathed not another word.

"All the same," she continued, "the General himself met you on the Grand Square to-day. I denied that you had gone out, and I searched for you all over the hospital. The General was right, you were not here. He asked me for your names; I gave him the name of one of you, I refused to reveal the other, and I did wrong, that is certain, for you do not deserve it!"

"Oh, how much I thank you, my sister!" But Sister Angèle did not listen to me. She was indignant over my conduct! There was but one thing to do; keep quiet and accept the downpour without trying to shelter myself.

In the mean time Francis was summoned before the director, and since, I do not know why, they suspected him of corrupting me; and since he was, moreover, by reason of his foolery, in bad odor with the doctor and the sisters, he was informed that he must leave the hospital the following day and join his corps at once.

"Those huzzies with whom we dined yesterday are licensed women, who have sold us; it was the director himself who told me," he declared furiously.

All the time we are cursing the jades and lamenting

over our uniforms which made us so recognizable, the rumor runs that the Emperor is taken prisoner and that the Republic has been proclaimed at Paris; I give a franc to an old man who was allowed to go out and who brings me a copy of the "Gaulois." The news is true. The hospital exults. Badinguet fallen! it is not too soon; good-by to the war that is ended at last.

The following morning Francis and I, we embrace and he departs. "Till we meet again," he shouts to me as he shuts the gate; "and in Paris!"

Oh, the days that followed that day! What suffering! what desolation! Impossible to leave the hospital; a sentinel paced up and down, in my honor, before the door. I had, however, spirit enough not to try to sleep. I paced like a caged beast in the yard. I prowled thus for the space of twelve hours. I knew my prison to its smallest cranny. I knew the spots where the lichens and the mosses pushed up through the sections of the wall which had given way in cracking. Disgust for my corridor, for my truckle-bed flattened out like a pancake, for my linen rotten with dirt, took hold of me. I lived isolated, speaking to no one, beating the flint stones of the courtyard with my feet, straying, like a troubled soul, under the arcades whitewashed with yellow ochre the same as the wards, coming back to the grated entrance gate surmounted by a flag, mounting to the first floor where my bed was, descending to where the kitchen shone, flashing the sparkle of its red copper through the bare nakedness of the scene. I gnawed my fists with impatience, watching at certain hours the mingled coming and

going of civilians and soldiers, passing and repassing on every floor, filling the galleries with their interminable march.

I had no longer any strength left to resist the persecution of the sisters, who drove us on Sunday into the chapel. I became a monomaniac; one fixed idea haunted me; to flee as quickly as possible that lamentable jail. With that, money worry oppressed me. My mother had forwarded a hundred francs to me at Dunkirk, where it seems I ought to be. The money never appeared. I saw the time when I should not have a sou to buy either paper or tobacco.

Meanwhile the days passed. The De Fréchêdés seemed to have forgotten me, and I attributed their silence to my escapades, of which they had no doubt been informed. Soon to all these anxieties were added horrible pains: ill-cared for and aggravated by my chase after petticoats, my bowels became inflamed. I suffered so that I came to fear I should no longer be able to bear the journey. I concealed my sufferings, fearing the doctor would force me to stay longer at the hospital. I keep my bed for a few days; then, as I felt my strength diminishing, I wished to get up, in spite of all, and I went downstairs into the yard. Sister Angèle no longer spoke to me, and in the evening, while she made her rounds in the corridor and in the mess, turning so as not to notice the sparks of the forbidden pipes that glowed in the shadows, she passed before me, indifferent, cold, turning away her eyes. One morning, however, when I had dragged myself into the courtyard and sunk down on every bench to

rest, she saw me so changed, so pale, that she could not keep from a movement of compassion. In the evening, after she had finished her visit to the dormitories, I was leaning with one elbow on my bolster, and, with eyes wide open, I was looking at the bluish beams which the moon cast through the windows of the corridor, when the door at the farther end opened again, and I saw, now bathed in silver vapor, now in shadow, and as if clothed in black crepe, according as to whether she passed before the casements or along the walls, Sister Angèle, who was coming toward me. She was smiling gently. "To-morrow morning," she said to me, "you are to be examined by the doctors. I saw Madame de Fréchêdé to-day; it is probable that you will start for Paris in two or three days." I spring up in my bed, my face brightens, I wanted to jump and sing; never was I happier. Morning rises. I dress, and uneasy, nevertheless, I direct my way to the room where sits a board of officers and doctors.

One by one the soldiers exhibit their bodies gouged with wounds or bunched with hair. The General scraped one of his finger nails, the Colonel of the Gendarmerie[8] fans himself with a newspaper; the practitioners talk among themselves as they feel the men. My turn comes at last. They examine me from head to foot, they press down on my stomach, swollen and tense like a balloon, and with a unanimity of opinion the council grants me a convalescent's leave of sixty days.

I am going at last to see my mother, to recover my

[8] Armed police.

curios, my books! I feel no more the red-hot iron that burns my entrails; I leap like a kid!

I announce to my family the good news. My mother writes me letter after letter, wondering why I do not come. Alas! my order of absence must be countersigned at the division headquarters at Rouen. It comes back after five days; I am "in order"; I go to find Sister Angèle; I beg her to obtain for me before the time fixed for my departure permission to go into the city to thank De Fréchêdés, who have been so good to me. She goes to look for the director and brings me back permission. I run to the house of those kind people, who force me to accept a silk handkerchief and fifty francs for the journey. I go in search of my papers at the commissariat. I return to the hospital, I have but a few minutes to spare. I go in quest of Sister Angèle, whom I find in the garden, and I say to her with great emotion:

"Oh, dear Sister, I am leaving; how can I ever repay you for all that you have done for me?"

I take her hand which she tries to withdraw, and I carry it to my lips. She grows red. "Adieu!" she murmurs, and, menacing me with her finger, she adds playfully, "Be good! and above all do not make any wicked acquaintances on the journey."

"Oh, do not fear, my Sister. I promise you!"

The hour strikes; the door opens; I hurry off to the station; I jump into a car; the train moves; I have left Evreux. The coach is half full, but I occupy fortunately, one of the corners. I put my nose out of the window; I see some pollarded trees, the tops

of a few hills that undulate away into the distance, a bridge astride of a great pond that sparkles in the sun like burnished glass. All this is not very pleasing. I sink back in my corner, looking now and then at the telegraph wires that stripe the ultramarine sky with their black lines, when the train stops, the travellers who are about me descend, the door shuts, then opens again and makes way for a young woman. While she seats herself and arranges her dress, I catch a glimpse of her face under the displacing of her veil. She is charming; with her eyes full of the blue of heaven, her lips stained with purple, her white teeth, her hair the color of ripe corn. I engage her in conversation. She is called Reine; embroiders flowers; we chat like old friends. Suddenly she turns pale, and is about to faint. I open the windows, I offer her a bottle of salts which I have carried with me ever since my departure from Paris; she thanks me, it is nothing, she says, and she leans on my knapsack and tries to sleep. Fortunately we are alone in the compartment, but the wooden partition that divides into equal parts the body of the carriage comes up only as far as the waist, and one can see and above all hear the clamor and the coarse laughter of the country men and women. I could have thrashed them with hearty good will, these imbeciles who were troubling her sleep! I contented myself with listening to the commonplace opinions which they exchanged on politics. I soon have enough of it; I stop my ears. I, too, try to sleep; but that phrase which was spoken by the station-master of the last station, "You will not

get to Paris, the rails are torn up at Mantes," returned in all my dreams like an obstinate refrain. I open my eyes. My neighbor wakes up, too; I do not wish to share my fears with her; we talk in a low voice. She tells me that she is going to join her mother at Sèvres. "But," I say to her, "the train will scarcely enter Paris before eleven o'clock to-night. You will never have time to reach the landing on the left bank."

"What shall I do?" she says, "if my brother is not down at my arrival?"

Oh, misery, I am as dirty as a comb and my stomach burns! I can not dream of taking her to my bachelor lodgings, and then I wish before all to see my mother. What to do? I look at Reine with distress. I take her hand; at that moment the train takes a curve, the jerk throws her forward; our lips approach, they touch, I press mine; she turns red. Good heavens, her mouth moves imperceptibly; she returns my kiss; a long thrill runs up my spine; at contact of those ardent embers my senses fail. Oh! Sister Angèle, Sister Angèle! a man can not make himself over! And the train roars and rolls onward, without slackening speed; we are flying under full steam toward Mantes; my fears are vain; the track is clear. Reine half shuts her eyes; her head falls on my shoulder; her little waves of hair tangle with my beard and tickle my lips. I put my arm about her waist, which yields, and I rock her. Paris is not far; we pass the freight-depots, by the roundhouses where the engines roar in red vapor, getting up steam; the train stops; they take up the tickets. After reflection, I will take Reine to

my bachelor rooms, provided her brother is not waiting her arrival. We descend from the carriage; her brother is there. "In five days," she says, with a kiss, and the pretty bird has flown. Five days after I was in my bed, atrociously sick, and the Prussians occupy Sèvres. Never since then have I seen her.

My heart is heavy. I heave a deep sigh; this is not, however, the time to be sad! I am jolting on in a fiacre. I recognize the neighborhood; I arrive before my mother's house; I dash up the steps, four at a time. I pull the bell violently; the maid opens the door. "It's Monsieur!" and she runs to tell my mother, who darts out to meet me, turns pale, embraces me, looks me over from head to foot, steps back a little, looks at me once more, and hugs me again. Meanwhile the servant has stripped the buffet. "You must be hungry, M. Eugène?" I should think I was hungry! I devour everything they give me. I toss off great glasses of wine; to tell the truth, I do not know what I am eating and what I am drinking!

At length I go to my rooms to rest. I find my lodging just as I left it. I run through it, radiant, then I sit down on the divan and I rest there, ecstatic, beatific, feasting my eyes with the view of my knickknacks and my books. I undress, however; I splash about in a great tub, rejoicing that for the first time in many months I am going to get into a clean bed with white feet and toenails trimmed. I spring onto the mattress, which rebounds. I dive my head into the feather pillow, my eyes close; I soar on full wings into the land of dreams.

I seem to see Francis, who is lighting his enormous wooden pipe, and Sister Angèle, who is contemplating me with her little moue; then Reine advances toward me, I awake with a start, I behave like an idiot, I sink back again up to my ears, but the pains in my bowels, calmed for a moment, awake, now that the nerves become less tense, and I rub my stomach gently, thinking that the horrors of dysentery are at last over! I am at home. I have my rooms to myself, and I say to myself that one must have lived in the promiscuosity of hospitals and camps to appreciate the value of a basin of water, to appreciate the solitude where modesty may rest at ease.

"BONJOUR, MONSIEUR"

BY JEAN RICHEPIN



This poet and teller of tales was born at Médéa, Algeria, in 1849. His tremendous exuberance of spirits at first found an outlet in military service during the war of 1870, and later in a collection of vagabond songs called "La Chanson des Gueux," for which shock to the conventions he was sent to prison for a month. Between 1877 and 1879 he published a variety of ballads while pursuing in picturesque flashes the careers of sailor and lighterman.

Richepin has written many stories, more or less with a penchant for extraordinary sensations and psychological anomalies. "Nana Sahib" is a play he wrote in 1883, in which, for a short time, he acted the principal rôle with Sarah Bernhardt.

Richepin is distinguished by his truly subtle use of words, by an unbridled, almost truculent, eloquence, clothed in rich and savory language.

"BONJOUR, MONSIEUR"

BY JEAN RICHEPIN

"Modernity, the essence of inquietude!"
—*Adrien Juvigny.*

FERDINAND OCTAVE BRUAT awoke one morning with an idea. Ferdinand Octave Bruat was what one commonly calls a man of letters. He had written verses that no one would publish, novels that all the publishers had returned unread, theatrical effusions that even the director of the Funambules had refused. However, he had, in default of talent, a theory, an ideal. He thought himself called to be a leader, and firmly believed that he had invented a modern school. He meant by that, all that constitutes our daily life, so bizarre on this side, so practical on that, so foolish on others. He maintained that the time had come to attack boldly all imitations, classic as well as romantic, and that he should ransack contemporaneous society to derive therefrom ideas, forms, a language absolutely new and original. He said that as each epoch had had its own expression so ours should have its own also.

He was not wrong. Unfortunately he had not the strength to carry to battle the standard he had raised, and all his valiance merely ended in debating much and haranguing in the cafés. He overthrew more fools

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than bigots and made more debts than masterpieces. But one morning, on rising, he found the masterpiece which he had sought. When I say he had found it, I am mistaken. *He had given birth to a title!*

What to do with it? As yet he did not know. But the title seemed to him eloquent, sonorous, easy to remember, rich in variations, full of modernity, epitomizing the whole century in a manner at once simple and complex. The title was the more wonderful that it was so common. It was a phrase of two words, spoken thousands of times each morning; a phrase without affectation, without pretense, without pedantry, neither classic nor romantic. It was simply, *"Bonjour, Monsieur!"*

Under this title he wrote first a sonnet. This sonnet was read to his friends, naturally accompanied by prefaces and commentaries philological as well as philosophical, destined not only to make them the better enjoy its essence, but also to make them thoroughly comprehend its import. With one voice it was pronounced admirable.

"It must be published at once," cried the most enthusiastic; "it will give the keynote to the poetry of the future."

One crabbed old fellow, who did not dare to give his opinion frankly, but who was irritated by this success, turned his criticism into a compliment.

"As for me," he said, "I believe the subject demands greater development. Certainly the sonnet is beautiful; but does it not strike you that it is not sufficient for a subject of such importance. Think of it! A

thing so profound, so varied, so complicated can not be confined in fourteen lines. A thought so powerful breaks its mold. Were I Bruat, I would turn my sonnet into a drama."

The assemblage adopted his opinion, enchanted at heart to see the famous sonnet thus criticized. Bruat did not perceive the irony of the grumbler. "You are right," said he with an air of superiority. "I have compressed my idea into this narrow mold. Thanks for your criticism, which proves how much you esteem me. Truly my idea deserves more than fourteen lines. I will write a drama in five acts and nine tableaux." And, in spite of the hypocritical protestations of his friends, he tore into pieces his masterpiece of a sonnet.

He lived for five years on the memory of his sonnet. He was always promising the astonishing drama—"Bonjour, Monsieur!" He was becoming almost celebrated by this piece in embryo. They knew that he had but a few scenes to finish; they said that the work was advancing. The simple-minded and the prejudiced who had never seen the author were convinced of his genius and spread his renown. To believe them, there was a great future, a marvelous hope; one must wait for the thunderclap. No doubt he was taking his time; but do not aloes take a hundred years to flower?

At last the drama was finished. This was a great event for the daily papers. What theatre would be the battlefield of the new school? Without doubt the directors would dispute for the honor of presenting

to the public the principal work of the nineteenth century? Would there be artists capable of interpreting it?

First of all, Bruat assembled his little court, wishing to give them the first-fruits of his victory. The drama did not meet with the success of the sonnet. Perhaps the wits had conceived in advance too high an idea of it? Perhaps Bruat had not been as brilliant as they had expected? Perhaps there was a little envy mingled with their judgment? Perhaps, also, the auditors were less young and therefore less enthusiastic? In short, the reading was a failure. The grumbler alone protested against the general coldness, and made a parade of an unlimited admiration.

"Well and good," said he; "here is something that expresses the idea in quest, here is movement, life, research, keenness. Away with the sonnet! My friend, you have found the new drama, the modern drama, the drama of the future."

But Bruat was disheartened. At least he mistrusted the grumbler, who had counseled him to substitute the drama for the sonnet. He owed him a grudge because the drama had produced no effect in comparison with the sonnet. "Well," said he to the others, "where am I at fault?"

"Oh, in nothing, nothing at all," replied the chorus of friends.

"However, my drama does not meet with your approval; I see it clearly."

"Do you wish me to tell you the truth?" interrupted one, emboldened by Bruat's failure.

"Say it, my friend, for you know it is my principle to seek truth everywhere."

"Well, I think that modern life is too complicated for the drama. There are casualties, phenomena of the heart, complications of sentiment, descriptions material and spiritual, inquiries physiological and psychological, which can not be expressed in action. You have striven against the difficulty. Sometimes you have avoided it, which has caused a lack of unity. Sometimes you have been overwhelmed by it, which has caused a lack of polish. In spite of all your talents you have not been able to control this monster. Your plot is obscure, your characters badly drawn, your conclusion unnatural. But, on the other hand, what observation! what brilliant analysis! what force of penetration! what language! Oh! to be inspired in spite of the obstacles, you must be a man of genius. What would you? The impossible can not be achieved. In your case I would recast everything; I would expand, I would clarify, I would develop, I would take my time, I would enlarge my frame to the size of my idea. I would turn my drama into a novel."

"He is right," said the chorus, "he is right. That is the point. You must make a novel of 'Bonjour, Monsieur!' "

The opinion was unanimous. Bruat was too sincere not to be guided by it. Heroically he burned his drama, and set to work on his novel. In this work he spent ten years. To him it was the time of apotheosis. He had more prophets than God. Some exalted him from real admiration; others, because they thought

he would accomplish nothing, and that, therefore, he would not be a dangerous adversary, spread his praises. Critics used his name to crush budding authors. Journalists filled up spaces with notices of his novel, with anecdotes of the labor in the thousand and one alterations in his work. The ignorant, the foolish, the gossips chattered about him without knowing why. He became as famous as the obelisk.

Nevertheless, they finished by waiting. The echo of his glory became fainter as it passed from one generation to another. At sixty he was about forgotten. He was only spoken of from time to time, and then merely as an eccentric, almost a lunatic. They remembered vaguely that he was working at a great novel, but they doubted whether he would ever finish it, or, rather, they were sure that he would never reach the end. They never spoke but with a smile of his gigantic undertaking, of the twenty volumes which would epitomize the nineteenth century, of this creation which would be the babel and pandemonium of modern life.

They would have laughed much more could they have known on what Bruat was engaged in his old age.

The unhappy man had finished his formidable novel. He had written twenty-seven volumes under the wonderful title, "Bonjour, Monsieur!" But at the end of his labor, frightened at having spoken at such length, he did not dare the trial of the reading. Then he set to work to abridge, to cut, to condense. By this means he had, little by little, reduced the book first to ten volumes, then to two, then to one. Finally, he had

epitomized everything into a story of one hundred pages.

Ferdinand Octave Bruat was then eighty years old. One friend alone remained to him, the confidant of his undying ambition.

"Publish your story," said his friend: "I assure you it will make a sensation in the world. It is the paragon of modernity."

"No, no," cried Bruat, "I have not yet condensed it sufficiently. You see, I know myself; I know the public. To hold it, to leave something to posterity, to create a lasting work, one must be intense. To be intense—that is everything. A hundred pages! That is too prolix. In my first inspiration I found the true form for my thought—a form short, precise, chiseled, straight, fitting the idea like a cuirass; I mean the sonnet. Oh! if I could recall the marvelous sonnet of my youth! But it has been abandoned too long. To-day I will do better. I will put into it my experience, my life. Could I but live ten years longer, men would see what fourteen lines could express, and posterity would know our modern life, so vast, in this poem so small, as one inhales a subtle essence prisoned in a diamond."

He lived those ten years, and the story was abandoned like the novel and the drama; and slowly, letter by letter, word by word, line by line, was written the colossal sonnet which was to contain everything.

At ninety-two Ferdinand Octave Bruat lay on his deathbed.

His faithful friend was at his side, weeping, sob-

bing, in despair at seeing so high an intelligence laid so low.

"Weep not, my friend," said Bruat, "weep not. I die, but my idea dies not with me. I have destroyed my first sonnet, I have burnt my drama, I have burnt, one by one, the twenty-seven volumes of my novel: the ten, then the five, then the two, then the one and only, then the story. But, at last, I have created my masterpiece."

"The sonnet! the immortal sonnet! Give it me! You have not read it to me, but I know that it is a masterpiece. Give it me; I will publish it. If necessary, I will ruin myself that it may be written on gold in letters of diamonds. It merits it, it will dazzle the world. Give it me!"

"The sonnet! What sonnet?" stammered Bruat, gasping for breath.

"Your great sonnet!" sighed the friend, who saw the delirium of death approaching.

"Ah! yes, yes, the sonnet, the great sonnet. Too great, my friend, too long! It must be made more intense."

"What! have you burnt your last sonnet also?"

"I have found something better. I have found everything. Modern life, modernity, I hold it, I have it, I express it. It is not in a sonnet, nor in a quatrain, nor even in a line, it is—"

His voice grew weaker, became hoarse, wheezy, lost.

His friend, with bloodshot eyes, gaping mouth, leaned over the bed to drink in his last word, the

word that would give the key to the mystery, the Open Sesame to art in the future.

"Speak, speak!" he cried.

"Everything in one phrase, everything in one phrase!" murmured Bruat.

And the old man raised himself up in a paroxysm of agony. His look was ecstatic. One felt that over the threshold of death he saw his ideal. He made a terrible effort to express it, and the wondrous phrase fell from his lips with his last sigh.

It was, "Bonjour, Monsieur!"

THE BIT OF STRING
AND
THE NECKLACE

BY HENRI RENÉ ALBERT GUY DE MAUPASSANT



Guy de Maupassant, writer of the short story par excellence, was born at the Château of Miromesnil in 1850, and died insane at Paris in 1893. His godfather Flaubert said of his first story, the "Boule de Suif," which appeared in a miscellany called "Les Soirées de Médan": "I consider it a chef-d'œuvre—that little story will stay, you may be sure." De Maupassant was for a few years connected with the Ministry of Marine and Public Instruction. Besides his almost perfect short stories, he has written plays and novels.

De Maupassant describes himself admirably in one of his heroes, "armed with an eye that gathers images, attitudes, manners with the precision of a camera." His style is calm, robust, sober, clean-cut, impersonal. "The Bit of String" and "The Necklace" are two famous examples of De Maupassant at his best.

THE BIT OF STRING

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

ALONG all the roads leading to Goderville the peasants and their wives were going toward the town, for it was market-day. The men walked at an easy pace, the whole body thrown ahead at each movement of the long, crooked legs, men deformed by rude labor, by guiding the plow, which at once forces the right shoulder upward and twists the waist; by reaping, which spreads the knees, for solid footing; by all the patient and painful toil of the country. Their blue blouses, glossy with starch, as though varnished, ornamented at the neck and wrists by a simple pattern in white, swelled out round their bony chests, like captive balloons from which heads, arms, and legs were protruding.

Some were leading by a cord a cow or calf, and their wives behind the animals were hastening their pace by the strokes of branches stripped of their leaves. The women carried on their arms great baskets, out of which hung, here and there, heads of chickens or ducks. They walked with shorter steps than their husbands, and at a more rapid pace, spare, erect and wrapped in scant shawls pinned across their flat chests, their heads enveloped in white linen drawn closely over the hair and surmounted by a bonnet.

Translated by Emar Soule. Copyright, 1899, by The Current Literature Publishing Company.

Now a pleasure wagon passed at a jerky pony trot, shaking fantastically two men seated side by side, and a woman at the back of the vehicle, holding on to its sides to soften the hard jolts.

In the square of Goderville was a crowd—a jam of mingled human beings and beasts. The horns of cattle, the high hats of the rich farmers and the headdresses of the women, emerged from the surface of the assembly; and discordant voices, clamorous, bawling, kept up a continuous and savage babel, overtopped now and then by a shout from the robust lungs of a merry countryman, or the lowing of a cow attached to the wall of a house. All this mass was redolent of the stable and soilure, of milk, of hay, of sweat, and diffused that rank, penetrating odor, human and bestial, peculiar to people of the fields.

Master Hauchecorne of Bréauté had just arrived at Goderville, and was going toward the square when he saw on the ground a bit of string. Master Hauchecorne, economist, like every true Norman, thought anything that might be of use worth picking up, and he bent down painfully, for he suffered from rheumatism. He took up the piece of string, and was winding it carefully, when he noticed Malandin, the harness-maker, watching him from his doorway. The two men had long ago had a quarrel about a halter, and both being vindictive, had remained unfriendly. Hauchecorne was seized with a kind of shame, at thus being seen by his enemy picking a bit of twine out of the mud. He quickly hid his prize under his blouse, then in his breeches pocket; then he pretended to

search the ground again for something which he did not find, and he went off toward the market, his head in advance, bent double by his infirmities.

He was forthwith lost in the noisy, shuffling crowd everywhere in motion from innumerable buyings and sellings. The peasants examined the cows, went away, came back, hesitated, always fearful of being outwitted, never daring to decide, peering into the face of the vender, endlessly searching to discover the ruse in the man and the fault in the beast.

The women, putting their great baskets down at their feet, had drawn out their fowls, which were lying on the ground, legs bound, eyes wild, combs scarlet. They listened to offers, held to their prices unmoved, their faces inscrutable; or suddenly deciding to accept an offer, cried out to the would-be purchaser slowly moving away:

"Agreed, Master Hutine; I will give it at your price."

Then little by little the square emptied, and the Angelus sounding noon, those who lived too far to go home dispersed in the various public houses.

At Jourdain's the great dining-room was full of feasters, as the vast court was full of vehicles of every pedigree—carts, gigs, tilburies, pleasure vans, carioles innumerable, yellow with mud, mended, out of order, lifting to heaven their shafts, like two arms, or nosing the ground, rear in the air.

Opposite the tables of diners the great chimney-piece, full of bright flame, threw a lively warmth on the backs of the row at the right. Three spits were

turning, weighted with chickens, pigeons, and legs of mutton, and a delectable odor of roast flesh and of juice streaming over its golden brown skin, escaped from the hearth, put every one in gay humor, and made mouths water. All the aristocracy of the plow dined there with Master Jourdain, innkeeper and horse-dealer, a shrewd fellow, who had his dollars.

The platters were passed and emptied as were the tankards of yellow cider. Each one talked of his affairs, his purchases, his sales. The harvest was discussed. The weather was good for grass, but a little sharp for grain.

All at once the drum sounded in the court before the house. All save a few indifferent fellows were quickly on their feet, and running to the door or the windows, their mouths full, their napkins in their hands.

When he had finished his roulade the public crier held forth in a jerky voice, cutting his phrases at the wrong place:

"It is made known to the inhabitants of Goderville and in general to all—the people present at market, that there was lost this morning, on the Benzeville road between—nine and ten o'clock, a wallet containing five hundred francs and important papers. You are asked to return—it to the town hall, without delay, or to the house of Master Fortuné Houlebrèque, of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward."

Then the crier went on. One heard once more far off the muffled beating of his drum, and his voice enfeebled by the distance. Then they all began to talk

of the event, estimating Master Houlebrèque's chances of finding or not finding his wallet.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the chief of police appeared at the door.

"Where is Master Hauchecorne of Bréauté?" he asked.

Hauchecorne, seated at the farther end of the table, replied:

"I'm here."

The chief proceeded:

"Master Hauchecorne, will you have the kindness to accompany me to the town hall? The mayor wishes to speak with you."

The countryman, surprised and disquieted, emptied at a draft his little glass of rum, arose, and, still more bent than in the morning, for the first movement after each relaxation was particularly difficult, he set out, repeating:

"I'm here, I'm here."

And he followed the chief.

The mayor was waiting for him, seated in his fauteuil. He was the notary of the vicinity, a big, solemn man, of pompous phrases.

"Master Hauchecorne," said he, "you were seen to pick up, on the Benzeville road, this morning, the wallet lost by Master Houlebrèque, of Manneville."

The peasant, astonished, looked at the mayor, frightened already, without knowing why, by this suspicion which had fallen on him.

"What! what! I picked up the wallet?"

"Yes; you yourself."

"Word of honor, I didn't even know of it."

"You were seen."

"Seen? What? Who saw me?"

"Monsieur Malandin, the harness-maker."

Then the old man remembered, understood, reddened with anger.

"He saw meh, th' lout? He saw meh pick up that string! See here, m'sieu mayor," and feeling in the bottom of his pocket, he drew out the bit of cord.

But the mayor, incredulous, shook his head.

"You won't make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Malandin, who is a man worthy of credence, took that thread for a wallet."

The peasant, furious, raised his hand, spit, to attest his innocence, and declared:

"Yet it's the truth of God, the sacred truth, m'sieu mayor. On my soul and my salvation, I repeat it."

The mayor continued:

"After picking up the object you went on searching in the mud a long time to see if some piece of money mightn't have escaped you."

The old man gasped with indignation and fear.

"May one tell—may one tell lies like that to injure an honest man? May one say—"

His protest was vain. He was not believed. He was confronted with Monsieur Malandin, who repeated and sustained his former affirmation. For an hour the two men hurled insults at each other. Hauchecorne was searched, at his demand, and nothing was found on him. Finally the mayor, greatly

perplexed, sent him away, warning him that he should inform the council and await orders.

The news spread. When he came out of the town hall the old man was surrounded and questioned with a curiosity serious or mocking, but with no ill-will in it.

He began to recount the story of the string, but no one believed him—they only laughed.

He went on, stopped by everybody, stopping his acquaintances, beginning anew his tale and his protestations, turning his pockets inside out to prove that he had nothing.

"Move on, old quibbler," they said to him.

And he became angry, exasperated, feverish, sick at heart, at not being believed. He did not know what to do, but told his story over and over.

Night came. It was time to go home. He set out with three of his neighbors, to whom he pointed out the place where he had picked up the bit of cord, and all the way home he talked of his adventure. In the evening he made a circuit of the village of Bréauté to tell it to everybody. He met only incredulity. He was ill all night from his trouble.

The next day, toward one o'clock in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a farm hand, of Ymanville, returned the wallet and its contents to Monsieur Houlebrèque, of Manneville. The man stated, in effect, that he had found the wallet in the road, but not knowing how to read, had taken it home to his employer.

The news spread all about. Master Hauchecorne

was told of it. He at once set out again on his travels, and began to narrate his story, completed by the dénouement. He was triumphant.

"It's not the thing 'at grieved me most, you understand," he said, "but it's the lie. Nothing harms you like being charged with a lie."

All day long he talked of his adventure. He told it on the streets to men passing, in the taverns to men drinking, after church the next Sunday. He stopped strangers to tell it to them. Now he was tranquil, yet something half disturbed him, without his knowing exactly what. People had an amused air as they listened to him. They did not appear convinced. He thought he detected whispers behind his back.

Tuesday of the following week he betook himself to the market of Goderville, driven there by the need of exploiting his case. Malandin, standing in his doorway, began to laugh when he saw him passing. Why? He accosted a farmer of Criquetot, who did not let him finish, but giving him a blow in the pit of the stomach, cried in his face:

"Go your way, humbug!"

Master Hauchecorne was dumfounded, and more and more ill at ease. Why had he been called a humbug?

When he was seated at table in Jourdain's inn he again began to explain the affair. A jockey of Montivilliers cried to him:

"Come, come, old croaker, I know about your string!"

Hauchecorne stammered:

"But since it is found—the wallet?"

The other answered:

"Hold your tongue, father. One finds, another returns. I know nothing about it, but I implicate you."

The peasant was left choking. He understood at last. He was accused of having returned the wallet through an accomplice. He tried to protest. The whole table began to laugh. He could not finish his dinner, and went out in the midst of mockeries.

He returned home, ashamed and disgraced, strangling with rage and confusion, so much the more overwhelmed, in that he was capable, with his Norman duplicity, of doing the very thing of which he was accused, and even boasting of it as a good stroke. Confusedly he saw his innocence impossible to prove, his chicanery being well known, and he felt himself cut to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Then he commenced again to recount his adventure, lengthening each day his story, adding each time new reasonings, more energetic protestations, more solemn oaths, which he invented and arranged in his hours of solitude, his mind occupied solely with the story of the string. He was believed the less in proportion to the complication of his defense and the subtlety of his argument.

"That's the reasoning of a liar," they said behind his back.

He felt it, spent himself, wore his life out in useless efforts. He wasted away visibly. Wags now made

him tell "the string" for their amusement, as one makes a soldier who has fought recount his battle. His mind, harassed and unsettled, grew feeble.

Toward the end of December he took to his bed. He died early in January, and in the delirium of his agony he attested his innocence, repeating:

"A little string . . . a little string . . . wait, here it is, m'sieu mayor!"

THE NECKLACE

BY GUY DE MAUPASSANT

SHE was one of those charming girls, born by a freak of destiny in a family of toilers. She had no fortune, no expectations, no means of satisfying her ambitions, except by a marriage with a rich and distinguished man, and, as she knew none, in order to escape from her surroundings, she married a clerk in the office of the Minister of Public Instruction.

She dressed simply, because she had no means of adornment; but she was as unhappy as though she had fallen from a high social position, for the women who have neither caste nor race use their beauty, grace, and charm as stepping-stones to those heights from which they are otherwise barred, their natural tact and instinctive elegance and quick perceptions being their only inheritance, and, skilfully used, make them the equal of their more fortunate sisters. She suffered incessantly when she glanced around her humble home, and felt the absence of all those delicacies and luxuries which are enjoyed only by the rich. In short, all the little nothings, that another woman of her caste would not have seen, tortured and wounded her. The sight of the old Breton peasant woman who performed her

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simple household duties awakened in her vain longings and troubled dreams.

She dreamed of beautiful halls, discreetly lighted by candles in great bronze candlesticks, whose rich carpets gave back no sounds and whose walls were covered with silks from the Orient, and of obsequious footmen half asleep in their large armchairs, ready to attend to your every want at a moment's notice; of large salons draped in ancient silks; of "étagers" covered with priceless bric-à-brac. She thought also of coquettish small salons, made expressly for the "five o'clock," when one receives only one's intimates or distinguished men of letters, from whom it is every woman's ambition to receive attentions.

When she was seated at the table (whose cloth had already done duty for three days) or opposite her husband—who evinced his entire satisfaction with the evening's repast by such exclamations as: "Oh, the good 'pot-au-feu'! I know nothing better!"—her imagination carried her away to stately banquet halls, whose walls were covered with rich tapestries, portraying scenes in which ancient personages and strange birds were pictured in the middle of a fairy-like forest. She pictured the glittering silver, strange dishes, exquisitely served on marvelous plate, and gallantries whispered and listened to with the sphinx-like smile with which a woman of the world knows so well how to conceal her emotions, all the while eating a rosy trout or dallying with a wing of a lark. She had no toilets, no jewels, and it was for these things that she longed, as the fleet Arabian longs for his native desert. What

pleasure to have pleased, been envied, to be seductive and sought after!

She had a rich friend, a comrade from the convent, whom she no longer visited, because she suffered from seeing the things she could not have, and on returning wept whole days for grief, regret, despair, and distress.

One evening her husband came home radiant, holding in his hand a large envelope.

"See," said he, "here is something for you."

She nervously tore open the envelope, drew out a card, on which these words were printed:

"The Minister of Public Instruction and Madame Georges Ramponeau beg the honor of the company of Monsieur and Madame Loisel for the evening of Monday, January 18th."

Instead of being wild with delight, as he had expected, she threw the invitation on the table, with an exclamation of disgust, saying sullenly:

"What do you wish me to do with that?"

"But, my dear, I thought you would be so pleased. You never go out, and this is an event. I only obtained it after infinite trouble. Everybody wants one; they are much sought after, and they are not generally given to employees. You will see there all of the official world."

She looked at him with supreme disdain, and said impatiently:

"What would you like me to wear?" The secret was out. Manlike, he had not thought of that.

"But—the dress—that you wear to the theatre,"

stammered he. "You always look beautiful to me in that."

He stopped speaking, stupefied and dismayed on seeing his wife in tears. Two large tears trickled slowly down her cheeks.

"What is the matter? What is the matter?" asked he tenderly. By violent effort she conquered her grief and calmly said, while wiping her humid cheeks:

"Nothing; only I have no toilet, and, of course, can not go. Give the card to one of your comrades whose wife is fortunate enough to have something suitable for the occasion."

Despairingly he said:

"See, Mathilde, how much will a dress cost to wear to this ball; one which can also be used for other occasions—something very simple."

She reflected a few moments, figuring in her own mind the sum she could ask without danger of immediate refusal and frightening her economical husband. Finally she hesitatingly said:

"I do not know exactly; but it seems to me I might manage with about 400 francs."

He paled a little, because he had been saving just that sum to buy a gun for the following summer, when he would go with some of his friends to the plains of Nanterre on Sundays to shoot larks. Stifling his regrets, however, he replied:

"Very well, I will give you 400 francs, but try to have a beautiful dress."

The day of the fête drew near; but Madame Loisel seemed sad, anxious, and uneasy. Her toilet was

ready, what could it be? Her husband said to her one evening:

"What is the matter? You have been so queer for the last few days!"

She replied: "It worries me that I have not one jewel, not a precious stone to wear. What a miserable figure I shall be! I think I would rather not go at all!"

"You can wear natural flowers; it is all the rage at this season, and for ten francs you can have two or three magnificent roses."

But she was not convinced.

"No; there is nothing more humiliating than to be poorly dressed among so many rich women."

"But how silly you are! Go to your friend, Madame Forestier, and ask her to lend you her jewels. You are friendly enough with her to do that."

She gave a cry of joy.

"Yes; that is true—I had not thought of it."

The following day she went to her friend and explained her predicament. Madame Forestier went to a closet and took out a large casket, and, opening it, said:

"Choose, my dear; they are at your service."

She saw first bracelets, then a necklace of pearls, a Venetian cross, gold and precious stones of exquisite workmanship. She tried them on before the glass, unable to decide whether to wear them or not.

"Have you nothing else?" said she.

"Oh, yes; look them over, I don't know what might please you."

Suddenly she opened a black satin case, disclosing to view a superb rivière of diamonds, her heart beat furiously with the desire of possession. She took them in her trembling hands and put them on over her simple high-neck gown, and stood lost in an ecstasy of admiration of herself. Then, fearfully, hesitatingly, dreading the agony of a refusal:

"Can you lend me only that?"

"Why, certainly; if it pleases you."

She fell on her friend's neck, embraced her tempestuously, and then left hastily with her treasure.

The day of the ball arrived. Madame Loisel was a success. Among all the beautiful women she was the most beautiful, elegant, gracious, and smiling with joy. She attracted the attention of some of the most distinguished men present, and on all sides was heard:

"Who is she?"

All the attachés of the cabinet sought her dancing card eagerly, and even the Minister himself expressed his approval. She danced with pleasure, thinking of nothing but the triumph of her beauty and the glory of her success. Intoxicated by all the admiration, she seemed to float through a cloud of happiness, intensified by her complete victory and the tribute paid to her charms, so sweet to the hearts of women. She left about four o'clock in the morning; her husband had slept since midnight in a small room, deserted except by two or three gentlemen who also awaited their wives.

He threw over her shoulders the modest cloak which

she had brought, whose shabbiness seemed to mock the elegance of the ball toilet. She felt the incongruity, and walked swiftly away in order not to be seen by those whose rich furs were more in accordance with the occasion.

"Wait," said her husband, "you will take cold; I will call a carriage."

But she heeded him not, and rapidly descended the staircase. When they reached the street, there was no carriage in sight, and they were obliged to look for one, calling to the drivers who passed by, but in vain. Shiveringly they walked toward the Seine and finally found on the quay one of those nocturnal coupés one finds only in Paris after dark, hovering about the great city like grim birds of prey, who conceal their misery during the day. It carried them to their door (Rue de Martyrs), and they slowly and sadly entered their small apartments. It was ended for her, and he only remembered that he would have to be at his desk at ten o'clock.

She took off her cloak in front of the glass in order to admire herself once more in all her bravery, but, suddenly, she cried out: "The diamonds are gone!" Her husband, almost half asleep, started at the cry and asked:

"What is the matter?"

She turned toward him with a frightened air.

"I—I have lost Madame Forestier's necklace!"

He rose dismayed.

"What—how! But it is not possible!" And they immediately began to search in the folds of the dress,

the cloak, in the pockets — everywhere, and found nothing.

"Are you sure that you had it when you left the ball?"

"Yes; I felt it while still in the vestibule at the Minister's."

"But if you had lost it in the street we should have heard it drop. It ought to be in the carriage."

"Yes; it is possible. Did you take the number?"

"No; and you have not looked at it, either?"

"No."

They looked at each other fearfully; finally Loisel dressed himself.

I shall go over the whole ground that we traveled on foot, to see whether I can not find it."

He went out. She sat still in her brilliant ball toilet; no desire to sleep, no power to think, all swallowed up in the fear of the calamity which had fallen upon them.

Her husband came in at seven o'clock. He had found nothing. He had been to the Prefecture of the Police, to the papers offering a reward, to all small cab companies, anywhere, in short, where he could have the shadow of hope of recovery.

She waited all day in the same state of fear in the face of this frightful disaster.

Loisel returned in the evening pallid and haggard. No news as yet.

"You must write to your friend that you have broken the clasp of the necklace and are having it repaired. That will give us time to look around."

* * * * * * * * *

At the end of the week they had lost all hope, and Loisel, to whom it seemed this care and trouble had added five years to his age, said:

"We must try and replace the jewels."

The following day they went to the jeweler whose name was stamped inside the case. He consulted his books: "I did not sell that necklace, madame, I only furnished the case."

Then they went from jeweler to jeweler, racking their memories to find the same, both of them sick with grief and agony. At last, in a small shop in the Palais Royal, they found one which seemed to them like the one they had lost. With beating hearts they asked the price.

Forty thousand francs; but they could have it for 36,000 francs.

They asked the jeweler not to dispose of it for three days, and he also promised to take it back at 34,000 francs if the first one was found before the end of February.

Loisel had inherited 18,000 francs from his father. He borrowed the rest.

He borrowed a thousand francs from one, five hundred from another, five louis here, five louis there—he gave notes, made ruinous engagements, had recourse to the usurers, ran the whole gamut of money-lenders. He compromised his whole existence risking his signature, without knowing that it would be honored, terrified by the agony of the future, by the black misery which enveloped him, by the prospect of all the physical privations and moral tortures. He went for

the new necklace and deposited on the counter his 36,000 francs.

When Madame Loisel returned the necklace to Madame Forestier, she coldly said:

"You should have returned it sooner, as I might have needed it."

She did not open the case, the one thing Madame Loisel had dreaded. What if she had discovered the change—what would she have thought? Would she not be taken for a thief?

. . . . . .

From that time on Madame Loisel knew what life meant to the very poor in all its phases. She took her part heroically. This frightful debt must be paid. Her share of privations was bravely borne. They discharged their one domestic, changed their location, and rented smaller apartments near the roof.

She knew now what meant the duties of the household, the heavy work of the kitchen. Her pretty hands soon lost all semblance of the care of bygone days. She washed the soiled linen and dried it in her room. She went every morning to the street with the refuse of the kitchen, carrying the water, stopping at each flight of stairs to take breath—wearing the dress of the women of the people; she went each day to the grocer, the fruiterer, the butcher, carrying her basket on her arm, bargaining, defending cent by cent her miserable money.

They were obliged each month to pay some notes and renew others in order to gain time. Her husband worked in the evening balancing the books of mer-

chants, and often was busy all night, copying at five cents a page.

And this life they endured for ten years.

At the end of this time they had paid all the tax of the usurers and compound interest.

Madame Loisel seemed an old woman now. She had become strong and hardy as the women of the provinces, and with tousled head, short skirts, red hands, she was foremost among the loud-voiced women of the neighborhood, who passed their time gossiping at their doorsteps.

But sometimes when her husband was at his office she seated herself at the window and thought of that evening in the past and that ball, where she had been so beautiful and so admired.

What would have happened if she had not lost the necklace? Who knows? Life is a singular and changeable thing, full of vicissitudes. How little it takes to save or wreck us!

. . . . . .

One Sunday as she was walking in the Champs Elysées to divert herself from the cares and duties of the week she suddenly perceived a lady, with a little child, coming toward her. It was Madame Forestier, still young, beautiful and charming. Madame Loisel stopped short, too agitated to move. Should she speak to her? Yes, certainly. And now that the necklace was paid for she would tell her everything. Why not?

She walked up to her and said: "Good day, Jeanne."

Madame Forestier did not recognize her and seemed

astonished at being spoken to so familiarly by this woman of the people.

"But—madame—I do not—I think you are mistaken."

"No; I am Mathilde Loisel."

"Oh!—my poor Mathilde, how you are changed!"

"Yes; I have had lots of trouble and misery since last I saw you—and all for you."

"For me! And how was that?"

"Do you remember the necklace of diamonds you lent me, to wear to the Minister's ball?"

"Yes; well?"

"Well, I lost it."

"Lost it! How could you, since you returned it to me?"

"I returned you one just like it, and for ten years we have been paying for it. You know, it was not easy for us, who had nothing—but it is finished, and I am very happy."

"You say that you bought a necklace of diamonds to replace mine," said Madame Forestier.

"Yes; and you never found it out! They were so much alike," and she smiled proudly.

Touched to the heart, Madame Forestier took the poor, rough hands in hers, drawing her tenderly toward her, her voice filled with tears:

"Oh, my poor Mathilde! But mine were false. They were not worth more than 500 francs at most."

THE WALL OPPOSITE

BY PIERRE LOTI



Louis Marie Julien Viaud, known as Pierre Loti, was born at Rochefort in 1850, of an old Protestant family. He shipped aboard the "Borda" in 1867, and made many voyages to India and elsewhere in the East. This young naval officer was so modest and retiring that his comrades called him "Loti," after the name of a little flower of India which discreetly hides itself. In 1891 he was elected to the Academy. His chief works are "Le Marriage de Loti," 1882, "Madame Chrysanthème," 1887, "Japoneries d'Automne," "Le Roman d'un Spahi," etc.

Loti is an impressionist, a personal psychologist—giving reflections of the passing show, fleeting things. "He has an exquisite instinct for the preservation of whatever is antique and beautiful—a Pied Piper who draws his admirers after him whether they will or no."

"The Wall Opposite" is an exquisite bit of symbolism, worthy to stand, as it does, in the same volume with the author's "Papillon de Mite."

THE WALL OPPOSITE

BY PIERRE LOTI

'WAY at the farther end of a court they lived, in a modest little suite, the mother, the daughter, and a maternal parent already quite aged—their aunt and great-aunt—whom they had come to shelter.

The daughter was still very young, in the fleeting freshness of her eighteen years, when they were compelled, after a reverse of fortune, to withdraw there into the most secluded corner of their ancestral mansion. The rest of the familiar home, all the bright side that looked out on to the street, it had become necessary to let to some profane strangers, who changed there the aspect of things ancient and obliterated the cherished associations.

A judicial sale had stripped them of the most luxurious furniture of other days, and they had arranged their new little salon of recluses with objects a little incongruous: relics of ancestors, old things brought to light from the garret, the reserves of the house. But they fell in love with it at once, this salon so humble, which must now for years to come, on winter evenings, reunite all three around the same fire and around the same lamp. One found it comfortable there; it had an air cozy and intimate. One felt a little cloistered there, it is true, but without melancholy, for the

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windows, draped with simple muslin curtains, looked out on to a sunny court, whose walls, 'way at this farther end, were adorned with honeysuckle and roses.

And already were they forgetting the comfort, the luxury of other times, happy in their modest salon, when one day a communication was brought to them which left them in mournful consternation: the neighbor was about to raise his apartment two stories; a wall was going to rise there, in front of their windows, to steal away the air, to hide the sun.

And no means, alas! to turn aside that misfortune, more intimately cruel to their spirits than all the preceding disasters of fortune. To buy that house from their neighbor, a thing that had been easy at the time of their past affluence, was no longer to be dreamed of! Nothing to do, in their poverty, but to bow their heads.

. . . . . .

And so the stories began to mount, line upon line; with anxiety they watched them grow; a silence of grief reigned among them, in the little salon, the depth of their melancholy measured day by day by the height of that obscuring object. And to think that that thing there, higher and still higher, would soon replace the background of blue sky or golden clouds, against which in days gone by the wall of their court trailed off in its network of branches!

In one month the masons had achieved their work: it was a glazed surface in freestone, which was next painted a grayish white, resembling almost a twilight sky of November, perpetually opaque, unchangeable

and dead; and in the summers following the rose trees, the bushes of the court, took on their green again more palely in its shadow.

Into the salon the warm suns of June and July still penetrated, but more laggardly in the morning, fleeing more hurriedly in the evening; the twilights of autumn fell one hour earlier, bringing abruptly down the dull, chill melancholy.

. . . . . .

And the times, the months, the seasons, passed. Between daylight and darkness, at the undecided hours of evening, when the three women left off one after the other their work of embroidery or sewing before lighting the evening lamp, the young daughter —who would soon be no longer young—lifted her eyes ever toward the wall, set up there in place of her sky of yesterday; often, even, in a sort of melancholy childishness that constantly returned to her like the sick fancy of a prisoner, she amused herself in watching from a certain place the branches of the rose trees, the tops of the bushes detach themselves in relief against the grayish background of the painted stones, and sought to give herself the illusion that the background there was a sky, a sky lower and nearer than the real one—after the manner of those who at night hang upon the deformed visions of dreams.

. . . . . .

They had in expectation a heritage of which they often spoke around their lamp and their work-table, as of a day-dream, as of a fairy tale, so far away it seemed.

But, as soon as they possess it, that accession from America, at no matter what price, the house of the neighbor shall be bought in order to pull down all that new part, to reestablish things as in times past, and to restore to their court, to restore to their cherished rose bushes of the high walls, the sun of other times. To throw it down, that wall, this had become their sole earthly desire, their continual obsession.

And the old aunt was accustomed to say at such times:

"My dear daughters, may God grant that I live long enough, even I, to see that happy day!"

. . . . . .

It tarried long in coming, that heritage.

The rains, and time, had traced on that glazed surface a sort of blackish stripes, melancholy, melancholy to look at, formed like a V, or like the trembling silhouette of a hovering bird. And the young girl contemplated that wearily every day, every day.

. . . . . .

Once, in a very warm springtime, which, in spite of the shadow of the wall, made the roses more advanced than usual, and more spreading, a young man appeared at the farther end of that court, took his place for several evenings at the table of the three ladies without fortune. Passing through the village, he had been recommended by some friends in common, not without *arrière-pensée* of marriage. He was handsome, with a high-spirited face, browned by the great blowings of the seas.

But he judged it too chimerical, that heritage; he found her too poor, the young girl, in whom, besides, the color began to fade for lack of sunlight.

So he departed, without return, he who had represented there for a time the sun, energy, and life. And she who already looked upon herself as his fiancée received from that departure a dumb and secret feeling as of death.

. . . . . .

And the monotonous years continued their march, like the impassive rivers; there passed five; there passed ten, fifteen, even twenty. The freshness of the young girl without fortune finished little by little by fading away, useless and disdained; the mother took on some gray hairs; the old aunt became infirm, shaking her head, octogenarian in a faded armchair, forever seated at the same place, near the darkened window, her venerable profile cut out against the foliage of the court below that background of glazed wall where the blackish marbling accentuated itself in the form of a bird, traced by the sluggish gutters.

In the presence of the wall, of the inexorable wall, they grew old all three. And the rose bushes, the shrubs, grew old, too, with the less ominous age of plants, with their airs of rejuvenation at each return of spring.

"Oh! my daughters, my poor daughters," said the aunt continually in her broken voice that no longer finished the phrase, "provided I live long enough, even I."

And her bony hand, with a movement of menace, indicated that oppressive thing of stone.

. . . . . .

She had been dead a twelvemonth, leaving a dreadful void in that little salon of recluses, and they had wept over her as the most cherished of grandmothers, when at last the inheritance came, very upsetting, one day when they had ceased longer to think of it.

The aged daughter—forty years struck now—found herself quite young in her joy at entering into possession of the returned fortune.

They drove out the lodgers, you may be sure, they reestablished themselves as before; but by preference they kept themselves ordinarily in the little salon of the days of moderate means: in the first place it was now full of souvenirs, and then besides it was again taking on a sunny cheerfulness, since they were to throw down that imprisoning wall which was to-day no more than a vain scarecrow, so easy to destroy by touch of louis d'or.

. . . . . .

It took place at last, that downfall of brick and mortar, longed for during twenty gloomy years. It took place in April, at the moment of the first balmy airs of the first long evenings. Very quickly it was accomplished, in the midst of the noise of falling stones, of singing workmen, in a cloud of plaster and of ancient dust.

And at twilight of the second day, when the work was finished, the workmen gone, silence returned, they found themselves once more sitting at their table, the

mother and the daughter, bewildered at seeing so clearly, at having need no longer of the lamp to begin their evening meal. Like a formal visit from familiar days gone by, they contemplated the rose bushes of their court spread out once more against the sky. But instead of the joy they had looked forward to there was at first an indefinable uneasiness: too much light all at once in their little salon, a sort of melancholy splendor, and the feeling of an unaccustomed void out of doors, of limitless change. No words there came to them in presence of the accomplishment of their dream; rapt, the one and the other, held by an ever-increasing melancholy, they remained there without talking, without touching the waiting meal. And little by little, their two hearts pressing still closer, that grew to be a kind of grief, like one of those regrets, dull and without hope, which the dead leave us.

When the mother, at length, perceived that the eyes of her daughter began to grow faded with crying, divining the unexpressed thoughts which must so perfectly resemble her own: "It can be built up again," she says. "It seems to me they can try, can they not, to make it the same again?"

"I, too, thought of that," replied the daughter. "But no, don't you see: *it would never be the same!*"

Mon Dieu! was it possible that such a thing could be; it was she, the very same, who had decreed it, the annihilation of that background of a familiar picture, below which, during one springtime, she had seen in high relief a certain fine face of a young man, and

during so many winters the venerable profile of an old aunt dead.

And all at once, at recollection of that vague design in the form of the shadow of a bird, traced there by patient gutters, and which she would see again never, never, never, her heart was suddenly torn in a manner most pitiable; she wept the most melancholy tears of her life before the irreparable destruction of that wall.

THE ANCESTOR

BY CHARLES JOSEPH PAUL BOURGET



Paul Bourget presents the greatest possible contrast to Anatole France. His style is involved, sentence is fitted into sentence, clothed like Henry James, and altogether un-French. Bourget's psychology, though penetrating, seems rather to clothe his characters than to create them, consequently his novels are long psychological treatises. It was a delight, therefore, to come upon this tale of Bourget's, in which the story is as absorbing as the psychology.

Bourget was born at Amiens in 1852, and began his literary career, as usual, by writing verses, etc. Besides "Outre Mer," which he published in 1891 after his visit to America, his work consists chiefly of novels, "Mensonges," "Crime d'Amour," "Le Disciple," "Cosmopolis," etc. He was elected a member of the French Academy in 1894.

THE ANCESTOR

BY PAUL BOURGET

ALFRED BOYER felt very happy that afternoon over the printer's proofs that the mail had just brought him. He could not take his eyes off the page containing the title:

"*Mémoires du Maréchal Frédet Prince d'Augsbourg, Duc d'Ivrea, with notes and introduction by Alfred Boyer, former student of the École de Chartres.*" The work to which he had devoted himself during the last two years was nearing completion. His name was going to be associated for ever with that of "Catinat of the Grande Armée," who had begun as volunteer in 1792, and had died of a broken heart after Waterloo.

Need one recall Frédet's heroism in the wars in the North—then too, in the first campaign in Italy, just under the walls of Ivrea, and his brilliant services in Egypt and Germany; how after Ulm, he had surrounded and taken prisoner ten thousand of the enemy at the gates of Augsbourg, with a handful of hussars? Austerlitz, Iéna, Eylau, Wagram, and Spain in turn saw this indefatigable soldier maneuvre his troops with the skill to which the "Mémoires" bore testimony. "I sent Frédet to Catalonia," said the Emperor, "with twenty thousand men. It was like sending fifty thousand. He alone made up the difference."

Translated by V. Quiroga. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

A very severe wound prevented his joining Napoleon in Russia, he achieved wonders at Dresden, though scarcely reestablished in health, and at Leipzig, where he saved the retreat by checking during several hours, the main body of the Austrian cavalry. Like Ney, and like the Emperor himself, he was one of those who sought death at Waterloo, and whom death would not accept, in spite of prodigies of valor, exalted almost to madness by the despair of the defeat.

When peace was concluded, the veteran shut himself up at Combronde, near Riom, on a small estate that he had acquired in Auvergne, where he had been born. It was there where he commenced to write or rather to dictate his mémoires in a haphazard fashion, following his exalted fancy, accumulating a pile of rather incoherent notes, which had slept in their portfolios for eighty years—from 1821, at which date the old soldier died, until 1900 when his grandson, the present Prince of Augsbourg, had at last decided to publish those papers, a little influenced, it must be admitted, by his need of money. Having a scanty fortune and a very large family—five marriageable daughters—he had been tempted by the success of "Marbot's Mémoires." He summoned from Paris to his little Château of Combes, where the meagreness of his income and his misanthropy kept him prisoner the year round, a young man who was to put in order that mass of documents mostly without shape. That is how Alfred Boyer found himself with a task that developed into a passion. Whatever may be the political value accorded to

the Napoleonic legend, its heroic character casts a magic spell that few historians of that fantastic epoch have been able to overthrow. That magic spell had acted so much the more on the young compiler, because the moral figure of Frédet was fully in accord with his military bearing. Among the portraits of those marshals, all equally brilliant, but not equally attractive, his was one of the most pure and exalted. The heroism of the Prince of Augsbourg retained to the last that antique charm that one imagines would have adorned Desaix had he lived long enough. It seems that Frédet never had any ambition for these dignities which his master delighted to shower upon him. When did he have a chance to enjoy them? Bonaparte, who knew men and their value, never ceased for a moment to keep him employed, in peace as well as in war. When he was not fighting, Frédet was an administrator. His proverbial integrity, his gentleness, and—a quality extremely rare in that army sprung from the Revolution—his religious fervor, gave to his countenance the look of a paladin. While he lived it was impossible to come in contact with him without loving him. He disarmed the envy of Marmont, the sour humor of Soult, and warmed the coldness of Macdonald. The writings of these three rivals in glory, give ample proof of it. Dead, his rare personality had just performed a similar miracle of seduction in his memorialist, who gazed as if hypnotized at the first page of the mémoires, and the bulky package of proofs. At that very minute he was living over again the two years of his arduous labor. He saw

himself once more, after his thesis had been approved, hesitating between accepting a poorly paid post as librarian in an obscure corner of some province, and the offer that one of his professors had made him, to work on the mémoires of the famous marshal. It was food and lodging assured for some time, a means of becoming known, and of laying aside a few thousand francs with which he could support himself until he could obtain appointment to some good post. Beyond this, Boyer did not know anything about the soldier whose papers he had to classify.

In that old house at Combes, which had remained unchanged during three-quarters of a century, he had commenced to give himself up to that retrospective semi-hallucination known only to those who have a scholarly disposition. Taine has pictured it in that eloquent page, where he describes himself at the archives, following over the yellowed paper the old writings of the men of the Revolution. "I was," he says, "tempted to speak aloud to them." In that poor mansion where the old hero had sheltered himself in his last few days, the walls were covered with relics of his glorious adventures, brought together in confusion; here, swords of honor hung on the wall, next to them some engravings representing feats of arms; there, portraits of the marshal himself, the first Consul, the Emperor, Frédet's chosen companions, among others that of Ney, who had been one of the witnesses to his marriage. Frédet's wife was there, frail and delicate in her rich costume of a court lady, painted by Gérard, in an attitude identical with that

of the Duchess of Rovigo, on the edge of a park leaning on a small column ornamented with helmets and cuirasses in high relief. She had survived her husband forty years, and to her piety was due the preservation of the home to which the eldest son of the family had not returned until 1875, after having served in the army and resigned while simple lieutenant-colonel, when another had—unjustly as he maintained—been promoted over him. His carelessness produced at least this advantage, that the species of family museum brought together through the sorrow of the grandmother had remained undisturbed.

In the mean while, that is to say, under the monarchy of July and the Second Empire, the Frédets had lived in Paris; the second Prince of Augsbourg as a peer of France, and then as Senator; the third, the present Prince, as an officer of the staff of Napoleon the Third. Physically the colonel was the living image of his illustrious grandfather. He had the leonine face, the calm and powerful mien, the grave eyes, the serious mouth, and also the athlete's muscles, broad shoulders and powerful neck. There the resemblance stopped. Was it lack of education or opportunity? Did he take morally after some ancestor on the mother's side? His father had married a girl of noble birth, but of that country nobility with whom hunting is the sole hereditary occupation. In his old age it was the only pleasure that seemed to survive in this heir to an illustrious name, the first ambition of a disappointed career.

Alfred Boyer recalled his strange impression during the first weeks of his sojourn when he saw the Prince

start out in the early morning, with his gamekeeper and his dogs and not return until nightfall, covered with dust or mud, sunburned or else soaked in rain, according to the weather, his gun on his shoulder, and his game bag bulging with the pheasants hunted during the day. To his five daughters, left at home under the charge of an old aunt, who managed the household for him, this taciturn hunter seemed to give no thought.

They were pretty and refined girls, and if the memorialist had not been a poor pale-faced student, his presence in this isolation with these five young unmarried girls might not have been without danger. But Alfred belonged to that class of timid, intellectual men who have no need of disenchanting experiences to put in practise the advice the fair Venetian gave so amusingly to Rousseau: "Avoid women and study mathematics." Being of a sickly nature, knowing himself awkward and homely, he had early turned into intellectual channels the feverish ardor that young men of his age usually spend in sentimental adventures. His only pleasures were the discoveries of unpublished texts, of ingenious hypotheses on obscure historical points, and the patient conquest of a chair in the Institute by force of erudite publications. The marshal's papers fell in well with this program, and with something more—the poetry of the extraordinary imperial exploit incarnate in one of the most magnificent workers. Thus it was that after having engaged in the work as compiler of records, Alfred Boyer continued as enthusiast, identifying himself with his hero in each episode of his brilliant career, collating the

smallest anecdotes about him, claiming for him the first place in all the events in which he had taken part, putting himself at infinite pains to make this great man greater still; possessed by one of those retrospective idolatries at which we can not smile, so disinterested and pathetic are they when their object is a name sunk in misfortune and oblivion, like that of this soldier who had died of the defeat of his master and of France. What a work it was to decipher the piles of notes and documents he had left, to make selection from among the texts, to complete them with commentaries! But those "Mémoires" were at last to appear, all the traits of that noble figure were to shine out in a brilliant light, and the author of this posthumous justice could not gaze enough on the printed characters that would soon shine forth in the cover of the first volume—the complete work would be in four volumes—in the booksellers' shop windows. . . .

The sound of a door opening roused Boyer from his "semihypnotic" [1] trance. He raised his head and sprang suddenly to his feet. It was the Prince of Augsbourg who had just entered the library. Those visits, rare at first, had become more frequent as Alfred Boyer's work advanced. Not that the sportsman had ever ventured to give any advice to the memorialist, who had read to him some of the pages dictated or written by his grandfather—those, more frequently, in which the marshal told of the departure from his paternal roof (he was the son of a physician at Combronde), to join the army—the story of the

[1] "Demi-hipnose," writes Paul Bourget

first battle in which he had taken part, at Hondschoote —that of his last, and his farewell to the Emperor before the charge at Waterloo.

The manner in which he listened to those recitals, his head in his hands, never uttering a word, revealed an intense feeling in the hero's descendant. Evidently an almost religious cult for his ancestor burned in this obscure and wild nature, which Alfred Boyer pitied without quite comprehending. He could see that, overburdened by the weight of a great name, ruined by his father, discontented with his present circumstances, and knowing his inability to alter them, the colonel had fallen into that lethargy of the will in which for some years he had simply vegetated.

He had given up the society of his set, as well as his profession, turning countryman, and since his wife's death had not paid any attention to the small details in personal appearance that, even in the most ordinary surroundings, reveal the man who has been used to good company. It was evident that he loved his daughters, as proved by the sadness with which his eyes would sometimes rest on these pretty children, doomed by their portionless condition to some obscure marriage in that corner of Auvergne. The remnants of his fortune yielded an income of about thirty thousand francs a year. Was that enough to sustain the rank of a prince?

The colonel had said to himself that decadence would be better borne in the solitude of this house peopled with the memories of his grandfather. Thus he had reasoned.

Or at least that was the solution that Alfred Boyer had found in his mind to the enigma presented by that character; and his own constantly increasing cult for the marshal made him sympathize with the homage rendered by abdication to that ruinous heritage. The grandson felt the glory of the grandfather. That was enough to make the enthusiastic compiler of the "Mémoires" feel himself in sympathy with his taciturn patron, and on this occasion he felt keen pleasure at seeing him enter the library. He would show him the proofs just arrived by the courier. He welcomed the newcomer, and, handing to him the proofs, he said:

"I was just going to ask you to receive me, Prince. Our first volume is printed."

"I do not understand much about these things," replied the Prince of Augsbourg, after having glanced at the bundle of proofs, "but all this seems to me very good." He glanced through them again more slowly, stopping at certain passages that he recognized, and, a detail that Alfred was surprised to note, his face grew visibly more sombre. This made his resemblance to his grandfather much more striking. One would have said that to hold in his hand this book, which was, in a measure, his production since he had kept the memorialist at work at his own expense during the past two years, was more than painful to him. At last he returned the sheets to the young man, saying: "Yes, that is very good—but perhaps you will have to add some notes to it. Yes," he continued after a moment's hesitation, "I received a letter this morning informing me that certain documents will be

placed at my disposal. I shall have to go to Paris to fetch them. I have come to ask you to accompany me— Thanks," he went on as Alfred Boyer nodded assent, "I did not doubt that you would be willing to come—" He hesitated again, then with an effort he added: "Doubtless you have heard something about the Duchesse d'Ivrea."

"The Duchesse d'Ivrea?" repeated the young man. "I thought that title was one of those belonging to the Princess of Augsbourg."

"It is borne by the widow of my younger brother," interrupted the colonel, who added in a singular tone: "You are right. All the titles of the family should belong to the eldest, but my uncle was formerly called the Duc d'Ivrea, and my brother naturally took the same title. I am surprised at your not knowing this, after having been busy with the marshal, as you have, for almost twenty months. It is true," and a bitter smile curled his lips, "that, compared with him, we are scarcely interesting. And then my brother and I had not visited each other, and I do not know his wife. That is why I never mentioned her to you. She is very ill, she informs me—given up by her physicians, in fact. She wishes to deliver into my hands some family papers left in her keeping by my brother. I can rely on you, then. The most interesting part of them is a correspondence with Moreau during the latter's sojourn in America. You know that the marshal made a campaign with him in Holland. He foresaw his failure and wished to prevent it. These letters were offered for sale some years ago. They got them

away from me because they were wealthier than I, but now they wish to return them to me, and it is right that they should. We should find a place for them in the second volume. That will mean a great deal of revising, but it is worth the trouble. I shall leave you now, as I have many orders to attend to. We shall start this evening." . . .

While making his preparations after this interview, Alfred Boyer could not shake off an impression, that, vague as it was and without foundation, seemed to him a certainty. This visit to his sister-in-law was costing the Prince very dear. There was a mystery in their relations, and a very painful one. Whence came this rupture, and what were its causes, so profound that not the slightest mention of a Duchess d'Ivrea had ever been made either by the Prince or by any of his five daughters? Not one of them bore this name; they were called simply the Frédets of Augsbourg. What had happened between the two brothers? Had this rupture preceded the marriage? Or had that event been the cause of it?

All these questions presented themselves to the young man's mind without his having the faintest inkling as to their solution. During the long months of his sojourn he had not established relations with any one among the few country families in the neighborhood of Combes.

Moreover, he would have considered himself unworthy of the confidence that his patron had shown him from the very first, opening his archives to him, letting him live in complete intimacy with his household, if he had made any inquiries about the Frédets.

From the moment that there was a question of some family secret, to start a conversation on this subject with the old relative who acted as housekeeper would have been as impossible as to try and make one of the young girls talk about it. He knew no more of the affair when the day after the conversation the Prince and he arrived in Paris than he did on the preceding evening. During the journey he had noted the increasing preoccupation of his companion, who, when they reached the station, said to him: "I do not know as yet where we shall put up. Let us take a cab and we will stop at some lodging-house. I used to know a place in the Rue de Bourgogne, in the neighborhood of the Chamber of Deputies. We will be near the Rue de Grenelle, where our business is. The D'Ivrea house is the same that the marshal lived in under the Empire."

"Next door to the house of the Duc de Feltré?" returned Alfred Boyer. "It was only three days ago that I was transcribing the page on which he relates their meeting on the sidewalk in front of their houses on his return from Waterloo, and his refusal to return the Duc's salutation. How finely the passage concludes: 'Perhaps it was not just,' he writes, 'but at that time every French officer who had not fought at Waterloo filled me with horror. I should add that if the Duc de Feltré deserted us, at least it was not, as in so many other cases, for money. He was my friend, and I attest that I have always known him to be an upright man with clean hands.'

"Upright and with clean hands," repeated the Prince. "Yes, those were his words; I recall them,

too. That might have been his own device, do you not think so? My brother repurchased the house," he added after a pause. "I do not know how *they* have furnished it, but the façade should not be changed. It is of the seventeenth century and has the grand style of that period. You shall judge of it yourself this afternoon, for I do not intend to remain here long. I count upon going to the D'Ivrea house in this same cab as soon as we have engaged our apartment in the Rue Bourgogne. You will not leave me—I am not paying a visit to a relative. I have come here to obtain some papers that belong to me by right as the senior. You have been good enough to engage your services as historian for our family until the end of the publication of the 'Mémoires.' Your place, then, is with me."

They had taken their places in the carriage while the ex-colonel was thus formulating the program of a proceeding made the more mysterious by these words, and by the irrevocable determination that they indicated.

During the three-quarters of an hour that it took them to reach the Rue de Bourgogne, where the lodging-house still stood, and then the Rue de Grenelle, they were silent, the Prince absorbed in his thoughts, and the young man out of respect for a sadness of which he divined the cause, without being able to determine its precise nature. The sadness was changed into an actual contraction of pain when the carriage stopped in front of a high *porte-cochère,* above which could be read this inscription, recently restored, as the brilliancy of the lettering indicated: "Hôtel d'Ivrea." Alfred alighted first and waited before the open door,

ready to assist the Prince out of the carriage. The latter did not move. This last effort was almost intolerable to him.

"I thought at first I should send you in my place, my dear Boyer," he said, finally deciding to alight, "but she would not receive you. It is me that she wishes to see. She has adopted the only way, my veneration for the marshal. Let us go in—but it is so hard!"

Never in all those weeks that they had lived almost constantly together had he uttered such intimate sentiments to his companion. His irritation, which he scarcely gave himself the trouble to conceal, increased still more as they crossed the court at the back of which rose the beautiful gray façade he had spoken of, with its high windows and its ample mansard roof pierced with bull's-eyes. Though Alfred Boyer was much moved by the family tragedy, of which the Prince's attitude was an index, he could not but admire the noble aspect of the structure in which the heroic Frédet had thought to find rest. But if the exterior of the ancient house harmonized with the legend of the hero, the interior offered a no less striking contrast to it. The extraordinary excess of gaudy upholstery, the multiplicity of trifling ornaments, and the total absence of real works of art, the petty coquetry of the curtains, everything from the very entrance stairs and the vestibule gave an impression of false luxury and cheap imitation. The walls and ceiling of the salon into which the two men were shown were draped with blue satin, the assorted portières were held up by silver-fringed curtain rings; double curtains of heavy silk

and lace veiled the windows. The sumptuous upholstering of the furniture utterly lacking in taste, the overladen garnishment of the mantel capped the climax, and made of this sumptuous apartment an almost questionable place. It fairly reeked with orders from the fashionable draper, of bank bills, and nothing showed personal taste. The abundance of coronets scattered everywhere proclaimed the parvenu. That the woman who ordered such furnishings for the austere mansion should be the Duchesse d'Ivrea was one of those paradoxes of fate that amuse only the unthinking. When one has such a passionate adoration for a hero as the compiler of the "Mémoires" had for the Duc d'Ivrea, such antitheses seemed to be a profanation.

Alfred was not surprised, then, at the visible repugnance shown in the face of the actual bearer of the name and arms of the Frédets during the few moments passed in the salon while they were waiting to be presented. The Prince had sent word by the servant that he was there with the gentleman who had charge of the publication of the marshal's papers.

As if turning his back on this cheap luxury, he had gone and leaned against the window, from which his rude hand had roughly pushed aside the flimsy curtains. He looked out on a narrow garden to which the first shoots of spring were already giving a touch of green, and which was vulgarized by a Japanese kiosk with colored windows. When the servant returned to the room, Alfred could see that the eyes of the sturdy hunter were suffused with tears.

"Well?" he demanded almost imperiously. "Madame la Duchesse is awaiting Monsieur le Prince," was the reply, "but alone; she is too ill this morning to receive two visitors."—"What did I tell you, Boyer!" exclaimed the Prince, not caring whether or not he was heard by the footman. "She wants me to come to pay her a visit, but I have not come with any such intention, and I will not have it so. I came with you to obtain the papers. Let her receive you or not in her bedroom, that is of no importance. You are none the less here in the house, and officially. Wait for me here then. It will not be long." Ten minutes later the irascible nobleman appeared again, holding in his hand a large sealed envelope, which he displayed, saying: "It is the first restitution, and the most important for us: the correspondence with Moreau."

And when they were again in the carriage, rolling toward the Rue Bourgogne: "I must do her this justice," he continued, without giving his sister-in-law her title, "she was quite correct. I found her in bed. I had never seen her, as I have already told you. She has the reputation of having been very beautiful, and she must have been. Though she is worn by sickness, she still has fine features and astonishing eyes. She is dying of cancer of the liver. She knows it; she told me of it. She returned these papers to me very simply, saying that on my next visit she would give me other documents, which she says she must arrange. I am not her dupe; they are all arranged. She wants to prove—though I have not the slightest idea to whom —that the Frédet family recognizes her since the

Prince of Augsbourg goes to her house. But the matter is done with. I have the packet necessary for our work. We can start back again for Combes with our booty this evening or to-morrow, and though it is to be regretted that some parts of it are lacking, still they are mere trifles. But let us assure ourselves that we have not been cheated.

"There were thirty-seven letters, according to the catalog of the sale at which they bought them. Good, here we are! we can go upstairs and make sure that the number is correct. Will you take charge of the matter and count them carefully? Thirty-seven—"

When they were both in the apartment, consisting of two little communicating bedrooms, that had been reserved for them, Alfred Boyer's first action was to open the envelope, which was fastened with a seal bearing the escutcheon and device of the Frédets. His historian's heart beat high as he saw that it was not merely a matter of simple notes, but of long letters, some of which covered ten or a dozen pages. He began to count them, drawing them out of the envelope one by one.

He was unfolding the fifteenth when he noticed a smaller envelope, that had been slipped into it. He took it out and read the direction: "For the Prince of Augsbourg." The envelope had not been sealed. He opened it mechanically, thinking that it had some connection with the correspondence. In it was a sheet of paper, again with the crest of the Frédets, on which he read with that swift look that takes in ten lines at a glance:

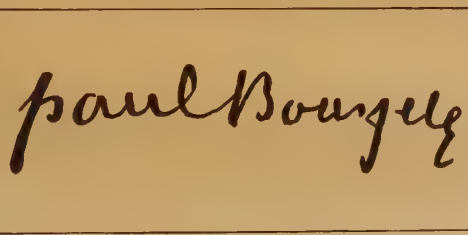
"This is my will, which annuls all preceding ones. I constitute as my sole legatee Monsieur Jules Frédet, Prince d'Augsbourg, under the express condition that he shall personally conduct my funeral, that he shall have my body as well as that of my husband deposited in the tomb of the Frédet family, and that I appear as donor of the letters to General Moreau in the forthcoming 'Mémoires' of the marshal. If Monsieur Jules Frédet does not accept this legacy, my will deposited at my notary's shall be valid in place of this. Given under my hand"—here followed a date and beneath it the signature: *"Duchesse d'Ivrea."*

"Is the count correct?" This question, snapped out by the Prince through the open door from the end of the other room where he had gone to dress, startled the young man. Surely he was quite innocent of all design, and he had no sooner discovered the confidential nature of the paper than he replaced it in its envelope. Nevertheless he had discovered its contents, and it was with cheeks flaming like those of a guilty man that he replied: "I do not know yet, but I have just found this in the correspondence." He had on the tip of his tongue the avowal of his involuntary indiscretion, but false shame restrained him.

"An envelope?" said the Prince. "Addressed to me? It must be some trick she has devised to get a letter to me. If it is a letter I shall tear it up without reading it. Let me see"—he had advanced to the door of the room and began reading aloud: *"This is my—"*

He stopped short. He had turned terribly pale. Alfred saw that his hand clenched over the sheet as





Paul Bourget

if to crush and tear it. Then, folding the paper, he returned it to its envelope and placed it on the mantel under a book, as if it were of no importance. He came back to the door and looked at Alfred, who was already bent over his work, prudently avoiding this look. He seemed to have a question on his lips that he did not put into words. He had stopped while shaving to call out his question. Without saying anything more he finished shaving while Boyer continued to arrange the letters with hands trembling with emotion, and the same emotion shook his voice as he said, finally breaking the silence, when the work was done:

"The thirty-seven letters are here."

"They are all here, eh?" replied the Prince. He was so upset that he did not notice the young man's embarrassment. "You need not begin to examine them until to-morrow morning," he continued. "I give you leave of absence for this afternoon. You have not been in Paris for a long time, and you may have some friends that you wish to look up here. You are at liberty for the rest of the day, but come back at about six o'clock to see if I need you."

He had scarcely reached the sidewalk of the Rue de Bourgogne, when the young man felt so strongly the pangs of remorse at not having confessed his indiscretion that he stood still for several minutes, asking himself whether he should not at once go upstairs and tell the Prince that he had read the will. At the same time he saw that, once in the Prince's presence, it would again be impossible for him to confess.

Not that he feared reproaches for the act itself; he had only done as he had been directed in ascertaining the contents of the envelope, which, moreover, was open. His silence afterward was easily explained by timidity. What now made the avowal so painful was the knowledge that he had surprised the grandson of his hero in a moment of mental anguish. The manner in which the Prince had spoken of his sister-in-law, his attitude at the D'Ivrea house, his gesture when he had taken up the envelope, his first words, then the contraction of his hand over the paper—all these indications combined to reveal an aversion which could not arise from a mere family disagreement, such as is ordinarily dissolved by death, but from a most intense, a most violent contempt. The silence concerning her maintained by the family proved that the aversion was not personal. Why? For what reason had all the elder branch taken such a stand against the marriage of the head of the younger branch? Alfred could no longer doubt that the Duchesse d'Ivrea knew the disposition of her relatives toward her. The method she had adopted to send her will to her brother-in-law sufficiently proved that.

Then why did she make this will? Why should she leave this fortune unreservedly to relatives for whom she ought to have a hatred equal to their own?

Suddenly the terms of this will that he had scarcely looked at—but how could he ever forget its smallest detail?—recurred to the young man's mind. The funeral, conducted officially by the Prince, the place in the family tomb at Père-Lachaise, the name in the

"Mémoires" of the marshal—it would be to acknowledge the relationship and the marriage with the Duc d'Ivrea, giving a formal revocation to an ostracism that, doubtless, had lasted many years and exasperated her womanly pride. The Duchess had placed the bargain entirely in the Prince's hands. The figure of the latter actually holding in his hands the paper that formulated this bargain arose before Alfred's mind with the clearness of a perfect image, and again he saw the conflict of the three emotions which his face had expressed: astonishment, anger, hesitation.

The Prince had hesitated. He hesitated still. Alfred, who had gone a few steps in the direction of the Bourbon Palace, stopped a second time to turn back to his lodgings. For a long time his eyes were fastened on the windows of the second floor, behind which a drama of conscience was being enacted of which he would soon know all the details. As yet he could only see facts that were of too doubtful a significance to enable him to form an opinion. "After all," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "it is none of my business. It is for the Prince to decide whether the motives of his antipathy toward his sister-in-law are stronger than his desire to become rich. The episode is worth my little trip to Paris; let us profit by it."

Ever since the now distant time when he had exiled himself in Auvergne until his work should have been finished, in order not to draw upon his savings, he had let slip the bonds of friendship that had united him to many of his comrades in the École de Chartres. Having no parents to visit, he began to think of them,

moved thereto, perhaps, by a last remark of his patron. All at once a face and a name stood out in his memory with singular distinctness. Was it not in this very quarter where he now was, in the Rue de l'Université, that one of his most charming classmates lived, Raymond de Contay? He was a young man of high birth, grandson to the famous Duchesse de Contay, who was so well known for her unbounded charity. After making an excellent record as student in the same college with Alfred, and having no desire to be an idler, he had enrolled himself in the École de Chartres. His intention had been to devote himself to historical work.

If Alfred had probed his own motives he would have recognized the fact that the sympathy he had formerly felt for this clever and pleasing youth was not the real cause of the temptation that led him irresistibly to go to his house this very morning in spite of the unusual hour. It was nearly noon. "I hope I will find him." A thought that was not inspired merely by a friendly feeling. The real cause was that Raymond belonged to the most select class. To Alfred, who had no idea of the air-tight partitions that divide the different circles of the various nobilities, this meant that his comrade certainly knew the Duchesse d'Ivrea, or had heard her spoken of by people who knew her. If any one could give him exact information about her it was Contay, and Alfred Boyer felt that he must have this information.

He hungered and thirsted for it, as much as if, instead of being the simple posthumous secretary to the

marshal Prince of Augsbourg, the blood of this hero coursed in his own veins, and he had a right to know who bore this title of D'Ivrea, won at the cannon's mouth on the battlefield. Besides, the will stipulated that the Duchess should figure in the "Mémoires" as the donor of the letters to Moreau, and was not his own honor involved in these "Mémoires"? Had he not devoted two precious years of his youth to them? Was he not ready to devote a third, with this recompense as his supreme ambition that his name as a poor scribbler should one day be linked forever with that of the mighty warrior of the "Grande Armée"? What if this woman, however, who bought a place in the book with the gift of her fortune, had made herself unworthy of the honor by some infamous action? Was such a thing possible? No. The master of Combes professed such a passionate reverence for his grandfather!

That her name should be cited in the "Mémoires," that the Prince should conduct the funeral, that she should be given a place in the tomb of the Frédets—never would he admit it, even for a moment, and even at the price of millions, that these three things could be granted to a person unworthy.

But the Prince had not destroyed the will—then he must have seen some possibility of conforming to it! Yet his sadness and disgust, the tone of voice in which he had spoken of *her*, as he put it, his first movement, his subsequent silence—how were all these contradictory indications to be reconciled? Alfred hastened his steps toward the sole chance of learning

the whole truth with a feverish impatience that amounted almost to pain. . . .

Raymond de Contay was at home getting ready to go out to lunch. This was a relief to Boyer, who in his embarrassment suddenly feared that it would look as if he had come, thus early, in order to be asked to stay for luncheon. But his classmate's welcome was so cordial that he had no scruples about suggesting that he should walk with him. As he ascended Raymond's stairs he felt an almost painful apprehension over the means he should employ in his quest. The pretext was furnished to him by his friend, who, not content with asking him about his work, wished to know how he had got along at Combes. Boyer took occasion to sketch in a few words the characters of the Prince, his five daughters, and the maiden aunt. With a lump in his throat at the thought of what he might be about to learn he continued: "This is all I have seen of the family. But there is another branch, the younger, now represented by the Duchesse d'Ivrea" —he looked for a sign of intelligence in his friend's face. "Who is she?"—"The Duchesse d'Ivrea," replied Raymond. "I do not know her."

"But she belongs to your world," said Alfred naively; then giving way to the morbid curiosity that had been goading him on ever since he had read the will, he added: "You surely must know some people who know her. I can not explain the matter to you, but I have a strong interest in knowing why she is at odds with her relatives. The matter concerns the entire future of my work, perhaps. In fact, I ask you

as a great service—understand me, a very great service indeed—to try to find out about her for me."

He spoke in so serious a tone, his face expressed so much anxiety, that Raymond was deeply impressed. He thought that probably these "Mémoires of Frédet" had started one of those disagreements between relatives that sometimes prevent for many years the publication of books of this sort.

"If you are so bent upon it," replied his comrade, "I shall try to find out. I am lunching to-day with one of my cousins, who belongs to all the clubs and has Paris at his fingers' ends. If your Duchesse d'Ivrea broke with her family for any reasons that have been talked about, my cousin will know them. I will drop you a line about it this evening, but I do not promise you success. In any event, give me your address."

Although this chance of seeing a little more clearly into the relations that existed between the celebrated marshal's heirs was very dubious, it was a chance, and for the time being the prospect calmed the agitation into which the morning's episode had thrown Boyer. He had a few errands to do relative to his work. He attended to them all carefully, and about six o'clock he found himself at the door of his lodgings in the Rue de Bourgogne. He asked if his patron were in. On the concièrge's reply that the Prince had not gone out during the afternoon, Alfred was again seized with the feverish curiosity of the morning.

Raymond had left no letter for him, from which he concluded that the inquiry of the cousin had been useless, and he ascended the stairs a prey to an uneasi-

ness that reached a climax when he found himself face to face with the Prince. Evidently the unhappy man was at the end of his mental resources. He paced to and fro from one extremity to the other of the two narrow chambers like a wild beast in a cage. The luncheon that he had ordered had not been touched and was still on the table, and at the first glance Alfred could see that the envelope that contained the will had not been moved from its place. It still rested under the book on the marble mantel. It had been beyond the Prince's strength even to touch it. Alas, the temptation had begun to work in him. Alfred had proof of it immediately in the words that were addressed to him as soon as he appeared.

"I have had news from the Rue de Grenelle," said the Prince. "It seems that she has had a severe attack since we left her, and almost succumbed to it. The doctor is not sure that she will live through the day. You see, we did well to come when we did for the letters to Moreau. Apropos of these letters, perhaps it would be well to publish them separately. We will talk it over. What I have been having a day-dream about is a library made up of works concerning the men of the First Empire who had relations with the Prince, all his papers well classified, and all his memoirs, and all of this installed in the D'Ivrea house where we were this morning. I can see the house now, stripped of the tawdry gewgaws that spoil it, and restored to the exact condition in which it was in the marshal's time. It would be very easy—we have the inventories at Combes. I would like to make it a mu-

seum to the glory of the "Grande Armée," with rooms consecrated to all the companions in arms whom he loved—a Ney room, a Masséna room, a Davoust room, a Macdonald room—what do you say to this project, my dear Boyer, with you as perpetual curator at some small emolument? Do not say no to it; you deserve the place. Do you imagine that I do not know the difference between purely mercenary work and that which you have devoted to the "Mémoires"? But your devotion shall not be lost. It is a pity that you could not be in Paris with your time your own, all your time, to devote to some great historical work. You shall have it. It is also a pity—do you not think so?—that so many objects of interest in the history of the Empire should be hidden away at Combes and that no one should know them? The portraits, for instance; they must be brought here; they must be—and it is the same with my daughters. I wish them to be here; I wish them to be married—well and happily married." For a long time he continued in this vein without any response from the young man. The Prince busied himself with the future employment of the fortune that had suddenly fallen into his possession, putting almost a kind of fever into his projects. He reveled in anticipatory visions of the noble end to which he would devote his wealth—always provided he accepted it, for his ardor in justifying the acceptance in advance clearly proved that he had not yet decided, as did also the painful hesitation in his voice, in his gestures, in the sound of his footsteps on the floor, and still more in his obstinacy in not returning to the house

of his dying sister-in-law. Against what idea was he struggling so violently? Against what apprehension of remorse? Why did this flood of imaginative confidences—since there was no question yet but of possibilities—roll forth while the real confidence, that which concerned the will, never appeared?

Alfred saw the whiteness of the envelope standing out against the gray on the marble mantel, and as he listened his heart became more oppressed with each new phrase, for each was a fresh sign that the Prince considered the acceptance of the conditions contained in that envelope as an indelicacy, worse than that, as a crime. A crime? Against whom? Against whom, if not against this ancestor? What image obsessed him, passing and repassing in all these words? that of the marshal. It was as if by making promises to that great figure he wished to disarm the anger of its shade, to expiate in advance an outrage on its memory that he was about to commit, that he had already committed in not at once spurning a certain offer.

How long might this strange monologue have continued, in which the grandson of the illustrious soldier concealed the fever of a terrible indecision by thinking aloud before a witness whose cognizance of the facts he did not suspect? Would Alfred Boyer have given way to the passionate longing he felt to interrupt this half confession with his own complete confession by crying out to the Prince: "I have read the will!" Would he, on the other hand, have continued to listen to this discourse, seeking to solve an enigma of which the answer had not yet been given?

An incident he had not hoped for suddenly extricated him from his uncertainty, all at once giving frightful distinctness to what had until then been only a vague guess. The servant came to tell him that Monsieur de Contay was waiting to see him.

"I got some information, as I thought I would, from my cousin," said Raymond after the other had flown downstairs four steps at a time in his haste to know. "I was not able to bring it to you before, and I have only a minute." He pointed to the carriage which was waiting for him in the street. "Here it is. The present Duchesse d'Ivrea has never been received, either by the family or by any one else. She was a fast woman, who had formerly been on the stage. She was then called Leona d'Asti. After living a very gay life, she married an old swindler on his deathbed, a confessed thief named Audry, who left her a very large fortune. Once a widow, she married D'Ivrea, a poor devil, who, it seems, had eaten and drunk up everything he had—a most shameful union for one of his name. Now you know as much as I do." . . .

Next morning, when the Prince of Augsbourg awoke from a sleep broken by all the nightmares by which intense moral anguish pursues us even in our rest, his first glance was toward the ill-fated envelope that his fingers had not touched since he had placed it under the book. Had he been dreaming? Had all the internal tempest of which he had been the victim been a hallucination, a stroke of madness? The envelope was not there. He jumped out of bed and went to the mantel; he lifted up the book. Nothing! Im-

mediately the whole series of events came back to him. No; he had not been mad. The scenes of the preceding day arose in his mind with a certainty that left no room for doubt; his visit to his sister-in-law, his return to his lodgings, Alfred Boyer handing to him the envelope and what had followed, his afternoon spent in struggling against temptation, Alfred's return, then his going out again, the note that the young man had afterward sent him and in which he said that he would dine out with a friend. The Prince had spent the evening alone, eating his heart out over the evil action that had such a horrible attraction for him. He had gone to bed early, without having been able to eat anything, in order to try to forget this ill-fated will, to forget himself. He had heard his neighbor come in about midnight—then all was a blank. He had fallen asleep, and now this mystery, this envelope missing. But how? Stolen—by whom?

He began to dress, a prey to the superstitious fear that sometimes lays hold of the most energetic men in face of an absolutely incomprehensible fact, and little by little his ideas began to coordinate in his mind. Of the two doors of his chamber, one, that which opened upon the stairs, was fastened with a bolt; he had neglected to turn the key on that which led to Alfred Boyer's room. The thief, then, must have come in by that door during his sleep. But he had remained awake until the young man had come in. Suddenly the Prince recalled the latter's face at the time of the discovery of the will; how he had flushed and avoided his eyes. He remembered also the expression on that

transparent face while, late in the afternoon, he had been developing those projects, all of which presupposed a change in the condition of his fortune. As in a flash of lightning the whole thing was clear to him. He sank half dressed upon a chair. He sat there motionless, a prey to a tumult of so many contradictory and violent emotions that his whole body trembled; disillusionment as to this fortune, suddenly snatched away, if the young man had actually destroyed the will; shame at having been seen by him, tempted and giving way to the temptation, anger at Alfred's audacity in having interfered, and by what right? Through his veneration for the marshal's memory, remorse that this veneration had been stronger in an outsider than in himself, and, in spite of all, a sort of sorrowful joy at this deliverance, if the will no longer really existed, with its shameful conditions, which were, indeed, less shameful than the origin of ignoble money. Again the D'Ivrea house rose before his mind's eye; he saw the great door hung with black draperies, with his coat-of-arms, the bier upon which that miserable creature, that public woman enriched by a swindler, who had dishonored his brother, should lie, himself behind her conducting this sinister mourning; and the tomb, the tomb! Wildly, as the prisoner who escapes from his cell through broken bars stained with his blood, but sustained, intoxicated by the freedom of liberty, he burst into the room where Alfred sat at his table. His bed had not been disturbed. He had not slept, and his pale face, his burning eyes, betrayed in what agony he had spent the sleepless hours.

Ever since he had glided into the Prince's bedroom to take the will and burn it he had been awaiting the terrible moment when his patron should awake, determined this time not to make any denial and to suffer the consequences of his act, whatever they might be.

"Boyer," said the Prince, "when you gave me that envelope yesterday, had you read the paper that it contained?"

"Yes," replied the young man.

"Did you know who the person was that wrote that paper?"

"I have learned since."

"And it was you who destroyed the will?"

"It was I."

"It was you!" cried the Prince; "you!" Then, bursting into sobs: "Let me embrace you and thank you in his name!" and he pointed with his hand to the thin sheets on the table in which was to be recognized the proud, delicate writing of "Catinat of the Grande Armée," of "the Black Lion," as the old soldiers of the First Empire had called him to distinguish him from his brother in arms, Ney, "the Red Lion." Tears streamed down his face, so like that of his glorious ancestor, while he pressed Alfred to his breast, and both of them, the old man and the young, felt that exquisite emotion that floods our souls with melancholy and an almost supernatural serenity when we have paid a sacred debt to the dead.

WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY

BY HENRI LÉON ÉMILE LAVEDAN



Henri Lavedan stands for the bright side of Parisian life of to-day—for the witty dialogue and the delicate sentiment. He has created a language of his own, sound, racy, with all the abruptness and unexpected drollery of the boulevards.

He was born at Orléans in 1859, and began his literary career by contributing to the journals satiric pictures of the manners and customs of the Paris world. Those written between 1885 and 1892 form a series of chronicles, which he has gathered into several volumes. Most of his works, however, are written for the theatre. In 1899 he was elected a member of the Academy.

WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY

BY HENRI LAVEDAN

MADAME DE PRECY said to her husband: "You wish to know what is the matter? Oh! I will tell you, if for a few moments you will condescend to lend me your attention."

In an icy tone he answered: "I will not lend, I will give it to you."

"Well, then, the matter is"—and a trembling voice betrayed her excitement—"that life with you has become unbearable and that I have resolved no longer to try to endure it. You are, I admit, an honorable man, and have, I believe, been a faithful husband. I, on my side, have never forgotten my marriage vows. Here we stand on the same ground. The trouble is that we are uncongenial. Everything I do annoys you, and to me all your ways are insufferable. What I say always vexes you, and your laugh drives me crazy. Even when silent, we provoke each other. About the merest trifles we have frightful scenes—about a hat, a dress, whether it will be best to carry a cane or an umbrella, or whether the meat is overdone or not—in short, everything—and everything makes us quarrel! Then, at home, either you talk so much that I can not put in a word or else you do not open your lips, and you look about as cheerful as a mortuary chapel. I

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must be happy when you are happy, sad when you are sad. Your temper is changeable, odd, quick; you do not allow the slightest contradiction; if I begin to speak of something which does not interest you, I am not allowed to finish my sentence. For me to express an opinion suffices to make you take an opposite view. You insist that you understand music, and that I know nothing about politics, while, in point of fact, the contrary is the truth. You scold my maid until she cries, and your disgusting valet drinks all the wine in my cellar. You forbid me to smoke, and insist that my dresses shall not be cut too low. And when we quarrel, even about some very ordinary matter, instead of its being over in five minutes, it lasts for hours, and we try to outdo each other in saying bitter things which neither of us forgets. In short, everything about me is disagreeable to you. I feel it, and I know it; you hate the tone of my voice, the sound of my step, my gestures, even my clothes; do not deny it, at this very moment I can read in your face that you would like to pitch me out of the window.

"Therefore?" said Monsieur de Précy.

"Therefore I conclude that it is wiser for us not to prolong our experience of married life. Its having proved a failure is neither your fault nor mine, or rather it is the fault of both; at any rate it is a fact. We were not made to live together; until we cease to do so, neither of us will be happy. After all, there is nothing to prevent us from amicably parting. Fortunately there is no child to quarrel about, we have each an ample fortune, so I really can not see

why we should any longer remain on the same perch, pulling out each other's feathers. As for me, I have had enough of it, and you have had too much. I am quite sure you will be happy; sometimes in the morning, while you are shaving, you will think of me; and for my part I shall always remember you as a perfectly honorable, thoroughly disagreeable man. But for that I bear you no ill-will, because it is in your blood, all the Précys are so, and your own father and mother, as you have often told me, could never contrive, for more than ten days at a time, to remain together. However, I will waste no more breath in talking about the matter, but will now, Monsieur, retire to my own rooms, where until to-morrow I shall pass my time in thinking over the most practical way in which to arrange our separation."

Monsieur de Précy had in silence received this avalanche of reproaches, but his lips twitched, once or twice he sighed, deeply sighed, and toward the middle of the discourse he had begun to pace the floor. When his wife ceased speaking he stopped before her, and, looking at her with an expression which he strove to render as dignified as possible, said in a sad, somewhat victimized, tone of voice: "Have you finished?"—"I have finished, and it is finished."—"So be it, my dear; the book is closed, and I, like you, think it best not again to open it. As you wish it, we will to-morrow separate and each try solitude."—"Oh, I permit you to enliven it!"—"Thanks, and I forbid you to do so."—"Gracious! I do not dream of such a thing. When I leave you, it is to become my

own mistress, not to change masters. You can be quite easy; to marry again would be a folly I shall never commit. Have you anything more to say?"—"No, except that if we take this step without knowing to what it may lead . . ."—"Oh! I know. First to peace, then to old age, finally to Père Lachaise."—"Do not joke, but please allow me to finish. We will do as we wish, but it is not necessary that the world should be at once enlightened as to our disagreements. That is my opinion, and I think you will agree with me."—"I do not know, because, of course, people can not long remain ignorant . . ."—"Yes, but for a time. Later the same objections will not exist. In short, this is what I ask: before taking any measures to obtain a divorce, let us by all means separate, but under special conditions which will save appearances, and excite no suspicions in the minds of our friends."—"What, then, is your idea?"—"As you wish to leave to-morrow, do so; but instead of taking refuge with some friend in the country or abroad, as is probably your intention, go to Meneaux, my château in Brittany, and as long as you can endure it—two months, if you have the courage—remain there. Madame Bénard, my parents' old housekeeper, who brought me up, is in charge. She will receive you, and in every way look after your comfort. You can tell her that I will soon join you."—"That, I imagine, will not be the truth."—"No, but you had better say so. The house is well furnished, pretty, and not more than four miles from Guérande. Under the pretext that Brittany is too far away from Paris, you have always avoided setting

foot upon this family estate where my childhood was passed. This, before we each go our own way in life, is a good opportunity to look at it. If you let this chance escape, you will never have another. Now can I count upon you? Do you consent?"—"You have made your request with civilty, and I consent. I will go to Meneaux, and will remain there for two months. You may send a telegram to Madame Bénard."

Then a few words more were exchanged with a coldness too intense to be quite genuine.—"Thanks—good night—good-by!—yes, good-by!"—Their voices did not tremble, oh no; but their hearts, their poor hearts, ached! Each one privately thought: "What? Can it be true we are to part—and forever? That is what we shall see, my wife! I'm not quite sure about that, my husband!"

But, nevertheless, Madame de Précy the next day departed.

. . . . . .

On a clear, fresh May morning the young woman arrived at Meneaux. It is at the seaside, a delightful moment when spring, like a tiny child on its uncertain legs, hesitatingly treads there. The sparse, backward vegetation is more rugged than elsewhere, the blue of the sky has a deeper tint, and in the salt air there is something bracing and healthful which brings red to the cheek and peace to the soul.

For Madame de Précy's occupation, Madame Bénard had prepared, on the second floor, a large bedchamber, wainscoted in oak and hung with old sulphur-colored damask, which on one side overlooked a wide expanse

of flat country, broken only here and there by a rock or a thin cluster of reeds; and on the other a pine wood ceaselessly murmuring in the breeze.

After she had emptied her trunks and made herself at home in her room, Madame de Précy found plenty of time for reflection. Nature offers to those who at a moral crisis fly to her, many consolations. By a sort of reflex action, she deadens pain, soothes and cheers. Her immutability, her apparent egotism, are good advisers. Before her who does not pass away one learns to see that everything else will do so, our little happinesses as well as our great sorrows; and the order which in everything she observes incites us to order also our hearts and minds. Madame de Précy began to think, and more seriously than for many and many a long day before. She reviewed her entire past life, beginning with the first white pages of cradle, dolls, first communion, long skirts and balls, next turning to the chapter of marriage. Her life had not been a romance, scarcely even a story, but very ordinary, without great joys, great catastrophes, or anything striking. Every night she had gone to bed with the secret hope that the next day something might happen. During the nine years of her married life, the sun had risen many times, but never had anything happened. Little by little she and her husband had become embittered, and perhaps he also, without being willing to admit it, had suffered from that monotony to some beings so irritating — monotony of things, hours, events, crimes, heroisms, vices, seasons, rain, sun, admirations, and anticipations. Her husband was not a man to be de-

spised: cultivated, distinguished, honorable, sometimes (only sometimes) tender-hearted—in fact, admirable—yet impossible to live with. So, while deploring her fate, in the bloom of youth finding herself thus alone and in a false position, she did not, however, regret the impulse to which she had yielded. She would not know happiness, but she could have peace. One can not expect everything at once. Without feeling that her dignity was compromised, she gladly accepted the society of Madame Bénard, the old housekeeper in charge of the château, and yet, as a rule, she was haughty. But Madame Bénard had brought up Monsieur de Précy, and then the country equalizes; its solitude brings together human beings, raising a little those who are below, and lowering a little those who are above, so that Madame de Précy and the good old lady—for a lady she really was—soon became friends.

On the day Madame Bénard took Madame de Précy through the château, she went first to a large room on the third story, and, as she pushed open the door, said: "I want to begin by showing you everything connected with Monsieur's childhood. This is the room where Monsieur played and amused himself when he was a little boy." Then she opened closets where lay balls, drums, trumpets, boxes of tin soldiers, games of patience, checkers, and dominoes, saying as one after another she fingered them: "These were Monsieur's playthings when he was a little boy." And suddenly she pulled from a heap a doll with a broken nose. "See, Madame! he even had a doll, that boy; he called her Pochette, and when he kissed her he used to

say: 'She shall be my wife!' Was it not ludicrous? Well, he would not say that now. He has something better." Madame de Précy did not reply. The housekeeper questioned: "It must agitate you to see all these things?"—"Yes, Madame Bénard."

Then the old lady took her to see the room where Monsieur used to sleep; sometimes forgetting herself, instead of Monsieur, she said Louis; and Madame de Précy was strangely moved at hearing pronounced by another that name she had so often called, but might never say again. The room where her husband used to study was next exhibited, with its shelves still filled by his old school-books and copy-books. One of the latter was seized by Madame Bénard, who, tendering it to Madame de Précy, cried: "See how well Monsieur wrote when he was a little boy." And traced in large, uncertain letters she read: "Let us love one another." Then she exclaimed: "I should like to go out into the air; I do not feel quite well."

They went out of doors, and for some moments silently walked about. When a large pond, on which floated two beautiful white swans, was presently approached, Madame Bénard announced: "Here is the pond where Monsieur kept his boat when he was a little boy. One evening he came near drowning himself. I shall never forget that."

When, a few steps farther on, they reached an old straight-backed, moss-grown wooden bench, on either side of which stood a tall earthenware vase, she cried: "This is the bench where Monsieur used to sit and read when he was a little boy."

Next they entered the vegetable garden, and Madame Bénard, walking at once toward a little plot, enclosed by a hedge of box, said again: "This was Monsieur's garden when he was a little boy."

As they afterward crossed the servants' court, a glimpse of the farm horses in their stalls, afforded by widely opened stable doors, caused Madame Bénard to exclaim: "Oh, Boniface used to be kept there!"

"What was Boniface?" asked Madame de Précy.

"Boniface was Monsieur's pony when he was a little boy."

So clearly had Madame Bénard brought before Madame de Précy a little Louis who studied, read, wrote, laughed, and played that she almost saw him now, in short trousers with sunburnt legs and bare head, running across the garden.

When later in the day they were both seated in the dining-room near a large window overlooking the sea, Madame Bénard began in a simple way to relate the story of Monsieur when he was a little boy. It was not very cheerful.

"I must tell you, Madame," said the old woman, "that Monsieur's parents were very peculiar. You never saw them, but I knew them well.

"Just imagine, they actually disliked each other, and without any good reason. That they were not 'congenial' was the only excuse they could give for living almost always apart; but think how wicked that was! If the father was in Paris the mother traveled, and when she returned he went away. They both loved Monsieur Louis, but rather than share his society pre-

ferred entirely to deprive themselves of it. So he was sent here to me, and I had to be to him both father and mother. That is the way I happened to bring him up, and I did my best. His parents both died quite young, and he, poor child, wept as bitterly as if he had known them. I can forgive him, but I'm quite sure that when I die he will not grieve as much.

"I tell you all this, Madame, because perhaps he has never done so, and also that you may be able to make allowance for him if sometimes he appears nervous, quick-tempered, or moody. It is not his fault; it is the fault of old times when he was a little boy. Had it not been for his deserted, lonely childhood, he would have grown up quite a different man."

All this Madame Bénard said and much besides, telling many anecdotes, and giving a mass of details, so that the conversation lasted until evening. Neither of the two women thought of ringing for a lamp, and darkness enveloped them. Therefore, Madame Bénard did not observe that Madame de Précy was furtively drying her eyes. When she rose it was to say:

"All you have related about my husband has interested me very much, dear Madame Bénard," and she warmly pressed the good old woman's hands. This did not astonish Madame Bénard, nor was she surprised when the young woman handed her a telegram for Paris to be sent to the office at Guérande. What did the telegram contain? What is sure is that it was sent that night, and that the next day Monsieur de Précy arrived.

A GENTLEMAN FINDS A WATCH

BY GEORGES COURTELINE



Georges Moinaux, whose nom de plume is Georges Courteline, was born at Tours in 1860. He has written a great number of one-act comedies that have been acted at nearly all of the best Paris theatres, the first called "L'Affaire Champignon," in collaboration with Pierre Veber, 1899, and the latest "Menton Bleus." Courteline is a sincere, earnest genius, but he prefers to masquerade as an amuser—he has been summed up as the nearest approach the French have to a Mark Twain. He assumes the quick, snappy, humorous, jaunty business style of the reporter as a rule, but in his one-act verse, called "Conversion d'Alceste," acted at the Comédie Française in 1905, he appears as a misanthrope.

A GENTLEMAN FINDS A WATCH

BY GEORGES COURTELINE

FROM the top seats of L'Étoile tram-car I perceived my friend Bréloc, who was just crossing the Place Blanche in such a state of excitement that I descended from the car on purpose to question him.

"Hey! my God! what is the matter, Bréloc? What is the meaning of this face of yours, more mournful than a shop closed on account of a death in the family?"

"Please don't mention it," he replied; "I just had a narrow escape from being put in jail."

Which led me to think that he had committed some dishonest action, and I began to ejaculate rather loudly, when he, guessing the turn of my thoughts, exclaimed: "You don't seem to understand! I was very nearly being put in jail through an unlucky watch that I picked up last night on the Boulevard Saint Michel, and which I honestly deposited in the hands of the commissaire [police inspector] of our ward. Pretty tough, heigh? I feel almost ill from astonishment and fright. But you can judge by yourself. Have you five minutes to spare?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Then listen, and I hope you may profit by my experience.

Translated by V. Quiroga. Copyright, 1907, by P. F. Collier & Son.

"About nine A. M. I presented myself at the police station in the Rue Duperré carrying said watch—a beautiful timepiece, by the way, with gold case and platina monogram—and I asked to be shown to the commissaire. That gentleman had just finished drinking his cup of chocolate, when he gave orders that I should be admitted to his presence, and without deigning to say good day or offer me a seat, he began:

" 'What do you wish?'

"I had composed my features for the occasion, with the smile of a man who accomplishes a meritorious act for which he expects to be almost crowned with glory. So I answered: " 'Monsieur le Commissaire of Police, I have the honor of depositing into your hands a watch that I found last night, and—'

"Without letting me finish the sentence, the commissaire sprang up, repeating the words:

" 'A watch! A watch!'

"The gendarmes were playing a game of cards in the next room.

"He hallooed to them:

" 'Hey! you there! Close the street door! There is more draft here than in a windmill!' And he remained grumbling until his order had been executed.

"Then, resuming his seat, he proceeded:

" 'Please give me that article.'

"I handed him the watch, which he began to turn about, examining and turning the winder, opening the case and the chain swivel.

" 'Yes,' he said gravely, 'it is indeed a watch, there is no denying.'

"Saying which, he deposited the watch in the depths of a very large safe, closing its three locks.

"I looked with astonishment, and he resumed:

" 'And where did you find this valuable article?'

" 'Boulevard Saint Michel, at the corner of Rue Monsieur-le-Prince.'

" 'On the ground?' asked the commissaire; 'on the sidewalk?'

"I answered in the affirmative.

" 'It is very extraordinary,' he then said with a suspicious look at me; 'the sidewalk is not the usual place to leave a watch.'

"I remarked smilingly:

" 'If I may call your attention—'

"Dryly the commissaire said:

" 'That will do! You may omit all remarks. I know my business.'

"I stopped talking and smiling.

"He resumed: 'In the first place, who are you?'

"I gave my name.

" 'Where do you live?'

" 'I have already said that I live at the Place Blanche, 26, second floor.'

" 'What are your means of living?'

"I explained that I had an income of twelve thousand francs.

" 'At what time, as near as you can tell, did you find the watch?'

" 'Three o'clock A. M.'

" 'Was not it later?' he remarked ironically.

" 'I don't think it was,' I said candidly.

"'Well, I congratulate you,' he said ironically. 'It seems to me that you are leading a somewhat singular existence.'

"As I was taking exception on my right to live according to my fancy:

"'Admitted!' said the commissaire. 'But I have a right to know what the deuce you could be doing at that hour on the Boulevard Saint Michel, corner of Rue Monsieur-le-Prince, you who *say* that you are living at the Place Blanche?'

"'What do you mean by that, I *say?*'

"'Yes, you say so.'

"'If I say so, it is a fact.'

"'That is what we must have proved. Meanwhile, please do not divert from the conversation, and answer courteously to all the questions that I feel duty bound to put to you. I am asking what were you doing at that unearthly hour in a neighborhood that was not your own?'

"I explained (as it was true) that I was coming from the house of a lady friend.

"'What does she do, your lady friend?'

"'She is a married woman.

"'Married. To whom?'

"'To a druggist.'

"'What is his name?'

"'That is none of your business,' I answered, impatiently.

"'Is it to me that you are talking like that?' hallooed the commissaire.

"'Of course.'

"The commissaire's face became purple.

" 'But, my boy! you will have to alter your tune; that strain of yours does not suit me. And—I fancy that I recollect your features.'

" 'Oh, bosh!'

" 'Yes—I do have a recollection—'

"There was a moment of silence. Then:

" 'Have you ever been committed for trial, Bréloc?'

"This exhausted my patience.

" 'And you?' said I.

"The commissaire sprang to his feet.

" 'You are a blackguard!' he cried.

" 'And you are an idiot!' I retorted.

"At that moment I thought my last hour had come. The commissaire bounded toward me, flushed and foaming with rage. Under his bushy eyebrows I could see the glistening of his wild eyes.

" 'What are you saying?' he stammered. 'What are you saying?'

"I attempted to utter a word, but he did not give me a chance.

" 'And I say this: that I am going to send you to jail; and it will not take a very long time! It is just the hour for the patrol wagon! Who on earth sent me up this dummy? Ah! you want to put on airs! Ah! you want to jeer at me, and at the law that I represent! Very well! you came to the wrong place!'

"He brought down his fist violently on the papers lying on his table with each of his sentences, adding:

" 'Do I know you? Do I know who you are? You say that your name is Bréloc; I don't know anything

about it! You say that you live at the Place Blanche. Where are the proofs of it? You say that you have twelve thousand francs income. Am I bound to believe you? Show me your twelve thousand francs! Hein! you would have a hard job to show them to me.'

"I was stunned.

" 'All this is not very clear,' he concluded violently. 'I say, do you understand me, that it is not very clear, and I don't know if you did not steal it, that watch!'

" 'Steal it!'

" 'Yes, steal it! Anyhow, I am going to find out.'

"The gendarmes, hearing the noise, had come into the room. He called out to them:

" 'Search this man!'

"In a second they undressed me completely, even down to my socks.

" 'Ah! you want to be smart!' the commissaire repeated mockingly. 'Ah! you want to play smart! Look under his arms,' he said to the gendarmes. 'Search him well!' "

At the recital of these indignities Bréloc's voice became overexcited. But I was laughing, nodding my hear approvingly, because I could recognize in his recital the two implacable enemies of honest folk—the administration and the law.

"Let me find another watch!" roared my unfortunate friend, with a closed fist as if threatening the future.

A YOUNG GIRL'S DIARY

BY MARCEL PRÉVOST



Marcel Prévost, a student of the psychology of women, born at Paris in 1862, is a graduate of the Polytechnic School, and was for several years connected with the manufacturing of tobacco. He retired from business in 1890 after having published three novels, and then wrote "Les Demi Vierges," which he turned into a successful play, and other novels, besides "Lettres de Femme," etc., and "Les Lettres à Françoise," 1902, intended for the instruction of young girls.

Prévost's great strength lies in his weakness. He is a facile analyst of sentiment, delicate and graceful. He does not lack a certain amount of vigor either—in "Le Scorpion" this vigor approaches brutality, in "Mademoiselle Jauffre" it is strength.

A YOUNG GIRL'S DIARY

BY MARCEL PRÉVOST

MY SUITORS

November —, 18—.

JUST as I was going up to my room, Monday night, mama kissed me, and said in the severe tone which she reserves for communications touching my marriage: "Juliette, two gentlemen will dine with us Thursday. Consider it settled. You know what you must do." I considered it settled, certainly; but mama was mistaken in one thing—I was in absolute ignorance as to what I must do. What is there for a young girl to do from Monday till Thursday, when she is to be inspected by two suitors for her hand? I can not change in face or form, and I really haven't the time to learn a new language, one of those tongues which possess, so mama says, such a powerful attraction for marriageable men! Nor have I even the time to order a new gown. I have decided, therefore, to remain just as I am, and to present to those gentlemen Thursday evening the Juliette of Monday, with her pink and white complexion, her five feet four of stature, and the two poor little living languages which she murders atrociously.

Who are these gentlemen? I have a faint suspicion.

Translated by Mrs. Clay C. MacDonald. Copyright, 1899, by The Current Literature Publishing Company.

Mama will not tell me their names, for she fears my preliminary criticisms. Usually I sit upon her candidates so thoroughly beforehand that she dares not exhibit them. "They are charming men," she declares; "charming, that expresses it. Much too good for a madcap like you. One of them is no longer young; but the other is not yet thirty." That mama of mine has such an adorable way of putting things! She regards my suitors collectively, offsetting the faults of the one with the good qualities of the other. Would she like to have me marry all of them at once, I wonder?

Papa gave me more information. I do anything I choose with papa by a walk to the Champs Elysées in the morning, or a stroll on the boulevards about five o'clock. I walk along with my hands clasped around his right arm, clinging to him, my large gray eyes raised to his white beard as if in adoration. People nudge each other as we pass, and how papa straightens up, and how happy he is! In these moments, if I were not a good girl, I could have my allowance doubled, or all the diamonds in the shop windows. It was on returning from just just a stroll that I questioned my dear old papa about the two musketeers that are to open fire next Thursday. Immediately he grew grave and answered:

"They are two charming men—charming, that expresses it. Much too good for a—"

"Madcap like me. Agreed. Why do you let mama put things into your head, you, who have such sound judgment? It is shameful!"

Now, nothing irritates papa so much as the discovery of mama's exaggerated influence over him.

"Put things into my head! Put things into my head, indeed! I will not permit you to say that your mother puts things into my head. I can judge men at a glance. The duke (papa was a prefect under the Empire) used always to say: 'Givernay—he is my hand and eye.' Do you know that, little one? I should think I know the saying of the duke. At the age of three I had already heard it told so often in the family that I never said 'papa' without immediately adding 'hand,' 'eye.' "

"Why, papa dear, you know very well that I am of the duke's opinion, and that is the reason I want you to guide me a little with your experience. I am not a judge of men myself, and suppose both these gentlemen should please me next Thursday?"

Evidently this contingency had not been thought of. And, nevertheless, suppose I should be smitten with both of them, with the one who is no longer young, and with him who is not yet thirty? Papa's eye, celebrated by Morny, grew large and round.

He reflected.

How amused I was!

"These two gentlemen," said he finally, "are certainly both capable of pleasing. However, I know one of them better, and therefore am disposed to favor him. He is a companion of the Imperial, Monsieur de Nivert, forty-three, cultured and high-spirited."

"What does he do?"

Papa wrinkled his brow and racked his brain in an

endeavor to think what Monsieur de Nivert could possibly do; after which he concluded, pitiably enough:

"I believe he doesn't do anything!"

And then he immediately resorted to mama's mode of defense; he considered the two collectively.

"But, on the other hand," said he, "the other gentleman is a young man with a brilliant future. He is Judge of the Exchequer, and not yet thirty. Just think of it! Gaston Salandier will be director-general of a great administration some day, or a minister, perhaps. And then he is very good looking."

Poor Monsieur de Nivert! It seems after all that his most brilliant qualities are possessed by Monsieur Salandier! This freak of Dame Fortune begins to make me sympathetic.

"But," said I, after a few moments' reflection, "it seems to me that mama was hesitating among four possible matches for me, and not between two."

Papa smiled.

"Yes; but after thoroughly considering the candidates, we have decided that two only are worthy of the prettiest girl in Paris. For," he added, kissing me, "you are the prettiest girl in Paris."

Poor papa, I should like a husband like him. And just think how desperate mama makes him!

Let us sum up the situation: Fate decrees that I shall become the wife of a serious young man, or of a middle-aged fashionable man of the world. Let me think a moment. No; I have never seen even the picture of the brilliant Judge of the Exchequer, who may, perhaps, be minister. But I think I noticed Baron de

Nivert at a club entertainment. It seems to me that he has not much hair, but, by way of compensation, as mama would say, he has a small stomach—oh, quite small. On the whole, he is not distasteful to me, for the baron, if I remember rightly, is very elegant and stylish in his dress.

Well, the die is cast! Idle nobleman or plebeian with a future, it is one of you two, gentlemen, who will wed—in January—Mademoiselle Juliette Givernay.

THE PRESENTATION

It is over. The presentation took place last night, and I must jot down the story of that memorable evening for the amusement of my old age.

Well, last night, at five minutes to eight, when my maid had assured me that all our guests had arrived, I made my appearance in the drawing-room. Entering a room is my forte. I don't think I have often failed in it. I walk straight ahead, gazing steadily before me over the eyes of those present; I do not see, nor do I wish to see any of those who are looking at me. I choose, on the contrary, as a point of direction, some old lady settled comfortably in an armchair, or some inoffensive old friend of papa's, or simply mama. Invariably all conversation ceases at once, and all eyes are centred on me. What wonderful tact I possess, and isn't it a pity to be compelled to exercise it in such a limited sphere?

Besides my parents, my suitors, and myself, the diners yesterday were Count and Countess d'Aube,

nobility of the Empire, whose combined ages would make a century and a half—insufferable bores, but fine people withal; Madame Salandier, the mother of the young Judge of the Exchequer, bourgeoise, with a protruding forehead, round eyes, and a ridiculous toilet, who showed much embarrassment at finding herself in our society.

At table Monsieur de Nivert sat on mama's right and Monsieur Salandier on her left. I found myself seated between Madame Salandier and Monsieur de Nivert. Madame Salandier immediately began talking to me in quite a patronizing tone that quickly irritated me. She extolled the serious character of her son, whom she proudly called "my own." "My own" retires every night at ten. She also offered me a few cursory glimpses of the qualities she expected her future daughter-in-law to possess—her deportment, economy, and domestic habits—"with occasionally a reception or an evening at the theatre, of course; that is necessary in the position which 'my own' occupies."

In the mean time "my own," quite at his ease and stroking from time to time his pointed beard (he is really very handsome), was holding forth on the reduction of the public debt.

Papa, mama, Monsieur d'Aube, Mademoiselle Espalier and even old Madame d'Aube, who is as deaf as a post, listened with open mouths, and Madame Salandier whispered in my ear:

"Listen to him. Not a minister is there that knows as much about it as he does—"

I looked at Monsieur de Nivert. He met my glance

with one of discreet irony, and immediately we felt like comrades, two exiles from the same country who had fallen among barbarians.

Monsieur de Nivert is not handsome, but it is astonishing what an immense advantage he has gained over his rival by simply not saying a word about the public debt. In pouring me a glass of wine he paid me a neat compliment upon my toilet, saying that there was something truly elegant and uncommon about it. And then he began to talk of dress in a low tone, while "my own" continued his harangue for the benefit of papa and mama, who do not know how to add up the household accounts, and of Monsieur d'Aube, who is an old imbecile, and of Madame d'Aube, who is deaf. The handsome judge, however, is not stupid if he is pedantic. In a few moments he saw that he was boring us.

"This conversation," said he, "must be quite tiresome to Mademoiselle."

"Oh, no," I replied artlessly; "I was not listening."

And I had the joy of seeing a look of dismay spread over the countenances of my parents and the good Espalier, while Madame Salandier glared at me like a bonze who has just seen a street arab of Paris make a face at his Buddha.

Monsieur de Nivert smiled.

A little piqued, I think, "my own" replied:

"Indeed, such a conversation is beyond the depths of the young girls of our continent. In America they willingly take part in such discussions. Is there not

some State in the North where women have the right to vote?"

"Do you hear, Juliette?" said mama.

Did I hear? I think I did! He wearied me, this economist bent on matrimony, and I let him see it very plainly. I took up the accusation of frivolity implied in his sentence, but I took it up as a banner. Proudly I declared my right—the right of a pretty woman to be ignorant, frivolous, and whimsical. I argued the advantages of frivolity over seriousness, and of spirit and dash over dignity.

Oh, papa's expression and that of the two relics of the Empire and the mother of "my own"!

"My own" seemed perfectly amazed at discovering a young girl capable of giving him a retort that took the wind out of his sails.

Nivert alone encouraged me with smiles and whispered bravos.

The dinner ended in confusion.

In the drawing-room, in order to serve the coffee, I became a very proper young lady again; but the company had not regained its wonted composure. Madame Salandier could find nothing better to say than to ask:

"Isn't Mademoiselle Juliette going to play something for us?"

"Certainly," said mama.

"Ah," thought I, "you wish some music; well, then, you shall have it. Wait a moment."

I seated myself at the piano and played—and I played without stopping. I played everything that I

could remember, for striking upon the little black and white keys soothed my nerves a little. Ah, you want some music! Well, listen. Take some Massenet, a little Mozart, some Serpette, some Wagner, and some Beethoven, some Lecocq, and some Berlioz, some Tchaikovsky, and some Nimporteki, one after another, haphazard, pell-mell; one hour and three-quarters at the piano without stopping. After which I turned round and looked at my auditors. They resembled a plantation after a hail-storm—they were simply annihilated. They took immediate advantage of the lull in the storm and fled. I was still caressing the keys with my right hand, and they trembled lest I should begin again. In a few minutes the drawing-room was empty.

Mama came toward me:

"Will you tell me now, Mademoiselle—"

But I stopped her short.

"Listen, mother. You know that I am usually very amiable and seldom nervous, but this evening I am very nervous. Don't worry me, please. We will talk to-morrow as much as you like."

And I ran lightly up to my room.

This morning, on coming down to breakfast, I expected to find my parents with long faces, but oh, what a surprise! they smiled upon me, they kissed me, and were as sweet as could be.

The key to this mystery? It is this: Papa rejoined the baron at the club last night about midnight, and Monsieur de Nivert said to him:

"My dear Givernay, your daughter is adorable!

You will, I hope, permit me to call upon the ladies again as soon as possible."

But what is even more surprising is, that an hour before breakfast a letter came from Madame Salandier, in which that former chestnut vender declared that "her son had been deeply impressed by the wit and grace of Mademoiselle Juliette," etc., and finally asked if my mother could receive her Monday to have a serious talk with her.

My friend Pepita was quite right when she said:

"Little Juliette, there are two classes of men that you must treat insolently in order to make them respect you—servants and suitors."

THE SIGN OF THE KEY AND THE CROSS

BY HENRI DE RÉGNIER



Henri de Régnier, one of the most distinguished living poets of France, was born at Honfleur in 1864. He has published a number of novels, such as "La Double Maîtresse," in 1901, aimed at reconstructing past eras of society, and a volume of tales distinguished for their originality. His first masters were Leconte de Lisle and De Heredia, but in the beauty of his harmony and tenderness he is original. He is a symbolist, chief of that younger generation of French writers who have set out to enlarge the resources of their national poetry. Edmund Gosse says that "of the number of experiment makers . . . he comes nearest to presenting a definitely evolved talent . . . a genuine artist of pure and strenuous vision."

THE SIGN OF THE KEY AND THE CROSS

BY HENRI DE RÉGNIER

AS I walked through the streets of the city I kept thinking of one of the stories which had been related to me by Monsieur d'Amercœur. Without having named the place where the circumstances occurred he described it minutely, so that I seemed to recognize everything. The old city, noble and monastic, crumbling in its dismantled ramparts beside the yellowish river, with, beyond, the mountains piled against the horizon; the narrow streets, half shade, half sunshine, the old walled-in houses, the churches and numerous convents, each with its chime of bells—all was familiar.

I seemed to find it again exactly as he described it, this city, an old pile of stones, sombre or luminous, wrapped in warmth and solitude, and the dusty ossification, retaining for such of its monuments as were yet standing the skeleton of past grandeur. In the centre the houses were crowded in a compact mass, still vast, outside of which the buildings were scattered, while over all a sleep or torpor seemed to hover, broken suddenly at times by a tolling or a merry clang of bells.

Translated by Sophie Earl. Copyright, 1900, by The Current Literature Publishing Company.

The streets, paved with flat stones or hardened with gravel, cut across each other oddly to open into squares where the markets were held. The flocks of the country-side gathered there to go away dispersed, according to their sale. The auction and the church service were, turn about, the sole occupations of the inhabitants. The place remained rustic and devout. The quick trot of the sheep pattered over the pavements, which echoed with the sandals of the monks. Pastor and flock jostled each other. The odor of the shearing mingled with the smell of woolen cloth. The air was redolent of incense and tallow. Shorn and tonsured. Shepherds and priests.

I arrived at the angle of two streets. A fountain was flowing into a time-worn basin. I remembered the fountain; Monsieur d'Amercœur had praised the freshness of its water. The street to the right ought to lead to the Close of the Black Friars. I followed its tortuosity, which wound into the very heart of the city. A few poor shops displayed their wares. Chaplets hung beside horsewhips. The street suddenly grew wider. The high frontage of an old mansion appeared. I had seen several others of the sort here and there, but this one was noticeable by some peculiarities. It was built on a battered stone masonry. The windows, high above the soil, were grated. In former times they must have utilized those foundations on which arose the present edifice of severe architectural design. At the corner of the structure the street turned abruptly and descended by steps, gradually encircling the back of the building, which proved

to be an ancient castle, a stronghold of which the blocks of stone were laid into the living rock.

I recognized the Mansion d'Heurteleure. The street ended; before me I saw an avenue of poplars. Old stone sarcophagi, now empty, stood in rows amid the long grass where a pathway had been worn. To the right stretched a wall with a low door at the side. I started as I perceived it. It opened into the herb garden of the monks, the portal of whose convent could be seen at the end of the walk. I paused and approached the little mural door. It was massive and iron-bound. The keyhole was shaped like a heart.

Continuing, I reached the convent porch and rang. The porter admitted me. Immense corridors led to vast halls. We ascended stairs, my guide gathering up the skirts of his frock as we mounted. We met no one. From the chapel, which I did not enter, came a droning psalmody of psalms. I was shown through several cloisters, one of them charming, square, full of flowers, and habited by doves, which grouped on the cornices like a natural, graceful bas-relief. From a church spire visible in the distance the horologe was ringing the hour. A great yellow sunflower was looking into the deep water of a well and reflecting there its golden disk, like a monstrance.

Nothing had altered since Monsieur d'Amercœur visited the city. The same aspect proved the duration of the same habits. The cracking of horsewhips still mingled with the tinkling of rosaries; the convent bells clanged their chimes together as of yore, when Monsieur d'Amercœur in frock and cowl, his bare feet

sandaled, his staff in hand, came knocking at the door. He asked to see the prior, which office was at that time held by Dom Ricard, whose tomb I was shown among the anonymous sepultures surrounding it. The prior had preserved powerful links with the world from which he had retired. Keeping one hand open there for alms and lending it, at need, in exchange for delicate enterprises, which might be aided by his prudence and wisdom. Monsieur d'Amercœur explained to him his costume, the motives for his coming, and the details of his mission.

After twenty years of high service in the army, a gentleman of the country, Monsieur d'Heurteleure returned to settle. He married shortly after Mademoiselle Callestie, a poor girl of good family and great beauty. The wedded pair lived at the D'Heurteleure mansion. The nobles of the city frequented the house, the most assiduous in his visits being Monsieur d'Aiglieul. He had served under and was related to Monsieur d'Heurteleure, who was very fond of him. Life at the mansion was very simple, no pomp, very few domestics; the dignity of rank was upheld by the vast proportion of the apartments, the width of the stairways, and the general aspect of antiquity.

Whether they grew weary of the dull existence in this old town after the excitements of a military life, were seized suddenly by a spirit of adventure, or from whatever cause it might have come, Monsieur d'Heurteleure and Monsieur d'Aiglieul disappeared one day, no one knew whither. Time passed. The searches were fruitless. Some mystery was hinted at.

Madame d'Heurteleure wept. All sorts of singular suspicions were afloat, which finally reached the court where these two gentlemen were still remembered. One day the double disappearance was mentioned in the hearing of Monsieur d'Amercœur, who determined to solve the enigma. He was empowered with full authority to act and at once he set about it.

His first care was to assume a monastic frock, certain with this attire to penetrate everywhere, through half-opened doors as well as through the fissures of conscience, and Dom Ricard helped him to the best of his power. For a while his researches were without result; but aided by the incognito of his costume and his apparent calling, his inquiries were patient and diverse. He hovered about the D'Heurteleure house, scrutinized the people and the habits, studied the life. He listened to and weighed all the still vivacious rumors. In vain. He wished to see Madame d'Heurteleure. He was told that she was ill. Every day he passed the house; following the street which rises around the sub-basement, he reached the front, pausing sometimes to slake his thirst at the fountain. Returning, as he descended the steps, he examined the enormous foundations of stone and solid rock, longing to apply his ear and listen to their mystery, for it seemed to him that the flanks of the old castle contained the fantom of the secret, which he had come to evoke from silence before it passed into oblivion. At last, discouraged, he was on the point of giving up. He would have taken leave of Dom Ricard but for the old monk's urgent advice to remain. The venerable

prior enjoyed the society of this sheep, so dissimilar to the members of the flock which his wooden cross conducted in the monotonous paths of the Order.

One day toward five o'clock in the afternoon, Monsieur d'Amercœur went out by the old portal and strolled amid the tall grasses of the avenue. The moment was melancholy and grandiose; the trees threw their shadows across the funereal path, the lizards ran over the warm stones of the antique tombs and in and out of their fissures. With one hand Monsieur d'Amercœur held up the long monk's frock, with the other he held the key to open the heart-shaped lock of the medicinal garden, where he loved to wander. He wished to visit it once more before he went away, to hear once more the soles of his sandals scraping over the gravel, while his frock brushed the borders of boxwood. The symmetry of the plots pleased him; their squares contained delicate plants and curious flowers; little pools nourished aquatic specimens which plunged their roots into the water, flowered and mirrored their bloom. At the intersection of the paths stood porcelain urns painted with emblems and pharmaceutical designs, with serpents twisted about the handles, and these urns contained varieties rare and precious. Above the walls waved the tops of the poplars; from the kitchen gardens off to one side, separated by high green trellises, came the sound of a rake, the striking of a spade against a watering can, the little sound of shears clipping the young shoots; in here all was silence; a flower bent, flexible, under the weight of an insect, swallows darted

about; dragon flies flitted across the greenish water; heavy plants and delicate vines twined and intertwined.

Monsieur d'Amercœur was going toward the door of this odd little enclosure when, at the end of the avenue, he saw approaching a woman dressed in black. She walked slowly with faltering steps. By some inner revelation he knew at once that this was Madame d'Heurteleure. He slackened his own pace, so as to meet her at the moment when he stopped before the door. Arrived there, he put the key into the lock. At the sound the lady started and hesitated. He stooped as though trying to turn the key. She wished to profit by this moment to pass; but found herself face to face with him as he suddenly turned. She stood with one hand pressing down her palpitating heart. He saw a face pale and lovely, though haggard from grief and insomnia, with troubled eyes, half-parted lips. Then he entered quickly, closing the door and leaving in the iron-heart of the lock the key.

The next day he was meditating in the little cloister when a messenger came to tell him that a veiled lady desired to speak with him. She was admitted. He recognized Madame d'Heurteleure, and invited her to be seated on a stone bench. The doves cooed softly on the capitals of the quiet cloister, their murmurs mingled with the sighs of the penitent. She sank on her knees, and with bent head and hands folded in his wide sleeves Monsieur d'Amercœur listened to her dolorous confession. It was a horrible and tragic story. Why relate it to him? Because her secret

seemed to have been laid bare. When she saw a monk holding a key to open that heart-shaped lock, she felt as though he meant to force open her conscience. Their meeting seemed like a decree of fate, his gesture a mysterious allusion to the deliverance of her soul imprisoned in the horror of its silence.

Her marriage with Monsieur d'Heurteleure was loveless. She esteemed, while she feared his noble character, the hardness of which intimidated her confidence and discouraged her tenderness. Years passed. One winter Monsieur d'Aiglieul appeared and called frequently. He was handsome and still young. She yielded to his love. Then followed days of joy and terror; a dread of discovery and an agony of remorse. Monsieur d'Heurteleure seemed unaware of their perfidy, though he grew suddenly old and another deep line was added to those already furrowing his brow. He was as usual often absent. One evening Madame d'Heurteleure retired to her room about midnight. She felt depressed. Monsieur d'Aiglieul had not appeared and he seldom missed a day. As she was combing her hair before a mirror she saw the door open, and her husband entered. He was booted, but his boots bore no trace of outdoor mire; his coat looked dusty, a long spider web hung from his sleeve and in his hand he held a key. Without speaking he went directly to the wall of the chamber where a nail fastened an ivory crucifix, which he tore off and broke upon the floor, while in its place he suspended the heavy rusty key. Madame d'Heurteleure gazed for a moment without comprehending, then all at once

her hands clasped her heart, she gave a cry and fell unconscious.

When she came to herself the whole affair was clear to her. Her husband had allured Monsieur d'Aiglieul into some trap. The old mansion in its invisible depths contained dungeons, chambers of eternal oblivion. A cry, his, vibrated still in her ears. It seemed to come from below, deafened by the piled-up stone, piercing the superposed arches, reaching her from those lips forever separated by the thickness of the walls. She tried to get out, the door was fastened, the windows were padlocked, the domestics occupied another part of the house and were beyond her call. The next day Monsieur d'Heurteleure came to bring her food. Each day he came. The spider's web still hung from his dusty sleeve, his boots creaked on the tesselated floor, the great line on his forehead deepened in a pallor of sleepless misery. He went away silently and to her tears and supplications he replied only by a brief gesture, showing the key hung against the wall.

During those tragic days the wretched woman lived with her eyes fixed on the horrible ex-voto, which grew larger to her vision, became enormous. The patches of rust looked like red blood. The house was still as death. Toward evening a step was heard. Monsieur d'Heurteleure again entered bearing a lamp and a basket. His head had grown white, he did not now so much as glance at the unhappy being who groveled at his feet, but he never failed to stare greedily at the key. Then at last Madame d'Heurteleure understood the desire which gnawed, which was de-

vouring him—to see his rival in death, to gloat over his vengeance, to feel of the corruption that had once been flesh and blood, to take down that key he had hung on the wall in place of the Sign of Pardon, the ivory emblem of which he had shattered to substitute an iron symbol of eternal rancor. But alas! vengeance never is satisfied, always she craves for more; frenzied, insatiable, she feeds on her own vehemence to the very dregs of memory, until the end of life.

Monsieur d'Heurteleure felt that she guessed his morbid longing and that added to his torture. The adamant of his pride was streaked with veins of blood. One night when Madame d'Heurteleure slumbered, stretched on her bed, she heard her door open softly and saw her husband on the threshold. He carried a lamp with the flame turned low, and walked as lightly as a shadow without a sound, as though the sombre somnambulism of his fixed idea had made of him an imponderable fantom. He crossed the room, reached up, took down the key and went out again. There was a dead silence. A fly awakened by the light buzzed for an instant and then ceased. The door remained on the latch. Madame d'Heurteleure bounded up. In her bare feet she slipped into the hall. Her husband was going downstairs; she followed him. At the ground floor he continued to descend; the stairway plunged into gloom, but she could hear along the subterranean corridors the steps which preceded her. They were now in the ancient substructions of the castle. The walls sweated, the ceilings were vaulted. A last stairway twisted its spiral into

the rock. At its base the light of the vanishing lamp still glimmered on the slimy pavement. Bending forward, Madame d'Heurteleure listened. A grating sound reached her and the light disappeared. At the foot of the stairs she found a circular chamber. An opening in the wall revealed a shallow bay; she still crept on, until, at the end of the passage, by feeling her way, she recognized a door very slightly ajar. She pushed it open. In a sort of square hole, vaulted above and tiled below, Monsieur d'Heurteleure was seated beside his little lamp. He was motionless, staring with wide-open eyes. He looked at his wife without seeing her. A nauseating odor came from the cell, and beyond the shadow spread over the tiles lay a fleshless hand already greenish in hue.

Madame d'Heurteleure did not scream. Should she waken the wretched somnambulist, whose frenzied sleep had drawn him to this tragic dungeon? Was she capable of inflicting this degrading shock upon his pride? No. The vengeance of the outrage was just. She felt pity for those wild eyes, which stared at her without seeing her, for the tortured visage, for the hair blanched by such poignant anguish, and it seemed to her best to protect the secret of this nocturnal adventure that he might never discover his self-betrayal. He must, she deemed, be allowed to satisfy his terrible craving in the eternal silence of the tomb, without ever knowing whose unseen hand walled him in face to face with his sacrilege.

Monsieur d'Heurteleure still gazed blankly at her. Very calmly she knelt and clasped the greenish palm

which stretched its fleshless fingers over the tiles, and then from the outside she closed the door. Walking away on tiptoe, she slid the bolt of the vault which closed the passage. She ascended the spiral stairs, the subterranean steps, the stairways of the upper house, and on the rusty nail of her chamber wall she suspended the tragic key, which balanced itself an instant, then hung motionless to mark an eternal hour.

The doves passed to and fro as they flew below the arches of the little cloister. The hour rang out simultaneously from all the belfries in the city. The miserable woman sobbed and offered Monsieur d'Amercœur the great key, letting it fall at his feet. He picked it up; it was heavy and the patches of rust were red like blood. He walked away. Madame d'Heurteleure, still kneeling, supplicated wildly with her hands joined convulsively. He descended toward the little garden, which embalmed the centre of the cloister with its fragrant flowers which grew in beds equally divided by boxwood. Great roses engarlanded the well with its stone circle; their thorns clung to the monkish frock as he bent over to drink; the water spurted out. A tall, golden sunflower mirrored its honey-laden monstrance. A dove cooed faintly, and Monsieur d'Amercœur, returning to his still prostrate penitent, murmured in her ear the words of an absolution which, if it lost nothing in heaven, gave at least on earth peace to a tortured soul.

THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

BY ALPHONSE ALLAIS



Alphonse Allais, who has left an original successor in Georges Courteline, was the great joker of Paris who died in 1905, at fifty years of age. He clothes his ideas in jaunty, rakish, crisp, up-to-date style, in the language of the reporter and of the boulevards. Like most of the modern French literary aspirants, Allais made his début in the Paris journals. He wrote humorous, fantastic monologues full of life, and what the French call "verve," which is a kind of sprightly enthusiasm tempered by an original personality. He has written, besides the three-act vaudeville called "L'Innocent," in collaboration with Alfred Capus, several other plays and vaudevilles which are immensely popular with the Parisians.

THE TELEGRAPH OPERATOR

BY ALPHONSE ALLAIS

I STEPPED upon the platform at Baisenmoyen-Cert station, where my friend Lenfileur awaited me with his carriage.

While on the train I suddenly recollected something that required immediate attention at Paris. Upon my arrival at Baisenmoyen-Cert, I went to the telegraph office to send back a message.

This station differed from others of its class because of the total lack of writing materials.

After a prolonged exploration, I finally succeeded in capturing a rusty pen, dipping it in some colorless, slimy fluid. With heroic effort I succeeded in daubing down the few words of my telegram. A decidedly unprepossessing woman grudgingly took the despatch, counted it, and named the rate, which I immediately paid.

With the relieved conscience of having fulfilled a duty, I was about to walk out when my attention was attracted by a young lady at one of the tables manipulating a Morse key. With slight hauteur she turned her back toward me.

Was she young? Probably. She certainly was red-haired. Was she pretty? Why not? Her simple black dress advantageously displayed a round, agree-

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able form; her luxuriant hair was arranged so as to reveal a few ringlets and a splendid white neck. And suddenly a mad, inexplicable desire to plant a kiss upon those golden ringlets seized me. In the expectation that the young lady would turn round, I stopped and asked the elderly woman a few questions anent telegraph affairs. Her replies were not at all friendly.

The other woman, however, did not stir.

Whoever supposes that I did not go to the telegraph office the next morning does not know me.

The pretty, red-haired one was alone this time.

Now she was compelled to show her face, and, *Sapristi!* I could not complain.

I purchased some telegraph stamps, wrote several messages, asked a number of nonsensical questions, and played the part of a chump with amazing fidelity.

She responded calmly, prudently, in the manner of a clever, self-possessed, and polite little woman.

And I came daily, sometimes twice a day, for I knew when she would be alone.

To give my calls a reasonable appearance I wrote innumerable letters to friends and telegraphed to an army of bare acquaintances a lot of impossible stuff. So that it was rumored in Paris that I had suddenly become deranged.

Every day I say to myself: "To-day, my boy, you must make a declaration." But her cold manner suppressed upon my lips the words: "Mademoiselle, I love you."

I invariably confined myself to stammering:

"Be kind enough to give me a three-sou stamp."

The situation gradually became unbearable.

As the day for my return approached, I resolved to burn my ships behind me and to venture all to win everything.

I walked into the office and wrote the following message:

"Coquelin, Cadet,[1] 17 Boulevard Haussmann, Paris: I am madly in love with the little red-haired telegraph operator at Baisenmoyen-Cert."

I tremblingly handed her the telegram.

I expected at least, that her beautiful white complexion would effulge.

But no!

Not a muscle relaxed! In the calmest manner in the world she said: "Fifty-nine centimes, please."

Thoroughly nonplused by this queenly serenity, I fumbled about in my pockets for the coin.

But I could not find a sou. From my pocket-book I took a thousand-franc note and gave it her.

She took the bank-note and scrutinized it carefully.

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[1] Coquelin Cadet (the Younger) is Ernest Coquelin, younger brother of Constant Coquelin, who is known as Coquelin Aîné (the Elder). Both are famous actors belonging to the Comédie Française and have visited America. The younger enjoys the greater popularity because of his jokes and the reputation he has made with his clever monologues, for the most part written as well as interpreted by himself.

The examination terminated favorably, for her face was suddenly wreathed in smiles, and she burst into a charming ripple of infectious laughter, displaying her marvelously handsome teeth.

And then the pretty young mademoiselle asked in Parisian cadence, the cadence of the Ninth Arrondissement[2]: "Do you want the change?"

[2] Paris is divided into twenty Arrondissements, or boroughs, each having its own mayor and borough hall. The 9th Arrondissement includes part of the Grand Boulevards, and the Opera House.

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